ÉVA FORGÁCS

The BAUHAUS IDEA and BAUHAUS POLITICS

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Art historian Éva Forgács’s book is an unusual take on the Bauhaus. She examines the school as shaped by the great forces of history as well as the personal dynamism of its faculty and students. The book focuses on the idea of the Bauhaus - the notion that the artist should be involved in the technological innovations of mechanization and mass production - rather than on its artefacts. Founded in 1919 by the architect Walter Gropius and closed down by the Nazis in 1933, the Bauhaus had to struggle through the years of Weimar Germany not only with its political foes but also with the often-diverging personal ambitions and concepts within its own ranks. It is the inner conflicts and their solutions, the continuous modification of the original Bauhaus idea by politics within and without, that make the history of the school and Forgács’s account of it dramatic.
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Acknowledgments
Éva Forgács

1 I first became fascinated by the Bauhaus when I was discovering the writings of the late Hungarian art critic Ernő Kállal In the collections of the Deutsche Bücherel In Leipzig. Throughout my years of thinking and working on this subject I have received unfailing encouragement, help and advice from my former professor, Dr Anna Zddor, at the Eötvös Loránd University in Budapest, from whom I have never stopped learning.

2 I am indebted to the staff of the Bauhaus Archiv In Berlin and of the Getty Archive In Santa Monica for their help with my research, and I owe a great deal to my family and friends - in particular to Zsuzsa Gáspár, Kati Sebes, Peter Balassa, Peter Dondth and, above all, Gyula - for patiently discussing, reading and rereading my manuscript, as well as mercilessly challenging my Ideas.

3 I am grateful to John Bátki for his close and sensitive translation, and, last but not least, to Pauline Wickham and Liz Lowther of the CEU Press, who made the publication of this work a reality.
Introduction

1 IN APRIL 1919 the Bauhaus opened its doors in Weimar, under the directorship of the architect Walter Gropius. It was the successor Institute to the Grand Ducal Saxon Art Academy and the Grand Ducal School of Arts and Crafts, the latter having been shut down at the outbreak of the World War.

2 Our first statement about the Bauhaus already contains the seeds of a conflict: the former Weimar Academy of Fine Arts, with its long tradition of landscape painting, was now renamed and headed by an architect enthralled not by the past or the present but by vistas of technological progress. As early as 1910 Walter Gropius presented his proposal For the Establishment of an Architectural Guild Founded on an Aesthetically Unified Basis and, by focusing on economy, speed and efficiency, and keeping in view the technological possibilities, had arrived at the concept of the 'factory-made building'. This approach, which was, on top of everything, internationalist, existed worlds apart from the emphatically nationalist culture epitomized by the genteel local school of landscape painting. Yet it was within this setting that Gropius had to find the modus vivendi for the survival of the new approach by the side of the old. Whether such coexistence is at all possible, and if so, under what conditions, is a question to which the history of the Bauhaus cannot give a universally valid answer. The historical circumstances surrounding its existence were far too special. The fact of the matter is that the town of Weimar wanted no part of the renewal symbolized by Gropius's first great achievement, the Fagus Shoe Factory, built in 1911 near Alfeld. This building was the first truly pure and elegant embodiment of functionalist architecture, a veritable manifesto of architectural modernism, with its glass walls wrapping around corners, its 'curtain walls' supported by a ferroconcrete framework, and its lucid articulation. Light years separated Gropius from everything the Academy stood for, not to mention the professors on its faculty, into this hallowed preserve of European cultural tradition, Goethe's hometown, came a burst of the freshest ideas, complete with their unkempt and raucous garnishings, setting in motion a process that one camp interpreted as cultural erosion, while the other side saw it as breathtaking accomplishment.

3 There is hardly an aspect of the Bauhaus that is not steeped in drama. The school seems to have spawned a veritable pyramid of mutually antithetical views, potentialities and irreconcilable oppositions.
Today, when the reaction to any and all manifestations of straight lines, sobriety and rationalism has ripened into the sensibility that defines itself as postmodern, the very mention of the Bauhaus may invoke shudders and revulsion. It appears as austere and unimaginative, almost militantly disciplined, if judged on the basis of its most characteristically known products. Postmodern taste has had enough of programmes and objectives anchored in the distant future, and is especially repelled by the subordination of the arts to anything of the sort. Economy of form, and a sensibility fine-tuned to minimalist stimuli, are elements of Bauhaus aesthetics that appear bleak and puritanical for postmodern tastes that tend to be based on much higher stimulus thresholds. But while the postmodern mentality abhors anything that smacks of passionate missionary zeal, the very heat of its rejection is a reaction to the discarded model. The intensity of postmodern anathematization invoked by the least overture of the Bauhaus reflects the fervour of the Bauhaus's own manifestos. However, if we are able to rise above the dichotomy of modern vs postmodern, we must of necessity note the rhythmic alternation, the almost regular ebb and flow of classicism and mannerism in tastes, formal styles and modes of thought on the European cultural scene. Gropius and the Bauhaus under his direction signify the counterpoint against Expressionism (which was the last dying flicker of Romanticism) and came to stand for the new era that opposed the Romantic-Expressionist viewpoint. It would be naive and short-sighted to evaluate or condemn the Bauhaus on the basis of historical givens and determinants that cannot define its essential qualities. Especially since, in the meantime, and who knows for how long, our worldview and expectations regarding the future have been derailed from hope to dread. The Bauhaus, fuelled by ideas of a better future - just after the First World War, but still steeped in its catastrophe - may not have much to say to the child of the postmodern era, who has good cause to be terrified, and, craving aesthetic delights, would prefer to turn towards the beauties of the past.

There is, in fact, no direct passage between the two eras and the two worldviews, unless it be the shared experience of a generation that enables one still to see in the parable of the Bauhaus an immediately applicable lesson, a valid model with importance undiminished in our days. At the time of writing - in the spring of 1989 - it appears that it is no longer only the age-group called with more or less accuracy the 'Sixties generation' that is entitled to feel a parallel between the ideals of its youth and the Utopias of the Bauhaus. In our days every social body, every creative or political association, may find an object lesson in the various forms of behaviour that characterize a community setting out with democratic intentions and struggling with the techniques of organizing itself, while constantly having to defend its openness and independence. Today, more than ever before, we may find the Bauhaus a useful model of a democratic community seeking a precarious balance in a world of power politics. It survived long enough to attempt to realize a democracy of ideas and artistic creativity in a variety of political situations, and this in the Germany of the Weimar Republic, where the attrition of the legal framework of democracy, a process that now seems unbelievable, progressed from day to day, while artists were convinced they were laying the foundations of a better world.

The Bauhaus offers itself for anatomical Investigation. Its history is filled with the fireworks resulting from the head-on collisions of idea and matter, spirit and everyday existence. For the anatomist once touched by utopianistic yearnings it offers a rich abundance of examples illustrating the many ways reality's capricious tissue may cast out the foreign body of any idea purporting to improve it. A survey of the history of the
Bauhaus will bring a peculiar fact to our attention: all of the plans and concepts upon which the institution was originally founded were eventually turned inside out. Not merely slightly modified in the course of time, but changed into their polar opposites. This realization should give us pause, all the more so because, as we follow the progressive changes in agenda, it is always obvious that Gropius and his companions were led by meliorist intentions. They strove for higher spiritual, artistic and ethical values. How was it possible, then, that a community which had unequivocally demarcated itself from the majority - and, from the Bauhaus’s vantage, backward - portion of society, intending in 1919 to exemplify a new, higher way of life, had by 1928 adopted a programme endorsing total integration into the rest of society, and, instead of redesigning society’s needs, now aimed to serve those already existing needs? How was it possible for the reverence accorded the creative artist in 1919 to turn into scorn by 1928? How could the respect and appreciation of artistic genius turn into the impulse that ‘scorns the apelike excitability called talent’?

Although the duration of the Bauhaus is nearly coterminous with the history of the Weimar Republic - the school was born amidst the catastrophic-euphoric feelings at the end of the First World War, struggled to survive during the years of the democratic republic, suffered through the gradual shift to the right, and its closing in April 1933 was one of the first actions of the Nazi Party - it would be too much of a simplification, too facile an explanation to restrict ourselves to these facts alone. Driving forces of another nature were also at work; the Bauhaus was the stage for a clash of personal and group ambitions, conflicting beliefs and convictions. Its masters and students had intended to be part of an experiment to evolve a model of a democratic creative community, proving by their own example that a better world does exist. But we can now see that although their efforts were directed towards raising a bold, rectilinearly constructed architecture, curving space-time, according to its own laws, had mercilessly warped the construct of their ideas, pointing it in a direction that none of them could have predicted at the time.

NOTES

Chapter 1. The Beauty of Progress

1 On 20 APRIL 1919 Walter Gropius received his appointment as director in the Weimar Court Chamberlain's Office. In 1969 he recalled: 'I arrived at the name instinctively. I did not want to use the term Bauhütte which had exclusively medieval connotations. I wanted a new, paradoxical name, something more far-reaching. The German word bauen has a very wide-ranging meaning: among other things, one builds character.1

2 Gropius was born on 18 May 1883 into a family coming from a long line of German Intellectuals. Both his father and his grandfather were architects, the latter a friend of the prestigious architect Karl Friedrich Schinkel. His grandfather's brother, Martin Gropius, designed the Berlin Museum of Applied Art, and became director of the Berlin School of Applied Art in 1867.

3 In the early years of the century Walter Gropius followed with keen interest the revolution taking place in technology and architecture, the beginnings of mass production and the rapid rationalization of its processes. While quite young, he became convinced that standardization and serial production would enter the domain of architecture as well. According to his second wife, Ise Gropius, he had arrived at this conclusion as a student in 1906, when an enlightened Pomeranian landowner, one of his uncle Erich Gropius's neighbours, commissioned him to build inexpensive housing for the employees on his estate. According to Ise Gropius, 'This is probably from where we may trace the germ of the idea that the construction of dwellings must be based on industrial mass production.'2

4 Actually this idea had been in the air. Advances in machine production brought about a new state of affairs in the manufacture of objects as well as in architecture. The challenge of the machine was taken up by creative individuals of every description, and German architects, painters, sculptors, art historians, manufacturers and educators responded in a wave of overwhelming momentum, confidence and optimism, supported by the mighty resources of German society and industry. 'In retrospect it seems as if all the spiritual and artistic power of the age had been waiting to join forces, obeying one and the same impulse,' writes Braun-Feldweg.3 This joining of forces occurred in 1907 with the establishment of the Deutscher Werkbund. The organizers and leading figures of the association, Peter Behrens, Theodor Fischer, Hermann Muthesius, Bruno Paul, Richard Riemerschmid, Henry van de Velde and numerous others, including politicians,
designated as their objective 'the ennoblement of handiwork through the union of art, industry and handcraft'.

The Werkbund amassed the leading personages of German art and architecture, and their unified front, together with the consolidated radicalism of their innovative strivings, endowed this association with considerable significance in public life. Most important was their insistence on quality, the aspect of production most threatened by mechanization. They declared their intention of 'selecting the best representatives of art, industry, crafts, and trades, of combining all efforts towards high quality in industrial work, and of forming a rallying-point for all those who are able and willing to work for high quality.'

Quality meant 'not only excellent durable work and the use of flawless, genuine materials, but also the attainment of an organic whole rendered sachlich, noble and, if you will, artistic by such means.' They deemed it important to give the matter the widest publicity, considering it a public issue of the gravest consequence, and realizing that the majority of society was unaware of the true significance of these questions. They grasped every opportunity to further their objective, relying on the triumph of the deepest human values to overcome and tame machines, and thereby maintain the human face of the human environment. In the words of Braun-Feldweg:

Their speeches, writings and acts indicate a passionate pedagogic involvement ... It is impossible to convey the breadth and intensity of the Werkbund's approach to innumerable problems of modern life, to the formal appearance of objects, and how it regarded these as basic issues of national identity. Whether it is 'the street as an artistic phenomenon' (August Endell); 'the structure of vehicles' (Ernst Neumann, painter and outstanding automobile body designer); Gropius pondering the 'style-creating power of industrial structures' ('These works of industry and technology must give rise to new forms'); or Peter Behrens speaking about 'the use of time and space and its effect on modern design developments' - we are constantly impressed by these men of action fully engaged in the whirl of everyday life, and their full awareness of it. All of the questions that still interest us have been raised by them in theory or practice during the years 1908-14, among calmer circumstances than those prevailing in the 1920s.

Given this kind of intellectual-professional environment, the programme developed by the Werkbund might have led to the young Gropius's growing conviction that only the collaboration of artists of the highest calibre could assure the aesthetic quality of standardized forms designed for mass production. This is where he may have derived his unshakeable conviction that human intuition must not be left out of machine-made products.

In 1907, when the Werkbund was established, Gropius was 24 years old and working at the architectural offices of Peter Behrens, who was perhaps the most highly regarded architect of the day. Thus the movement that claimed Behrens, chiefly a designer of Industrial plants, and other architects who mattered for Gropius, constituted the first - and possibly the most profound - professional and philosophical commitment in his life. In the 1913 Werkbund Yearbook he wrote: 'The invention of new, expressive forms demands a strong artistic ... personality. Only the most brilliant (genialsten) ideas are good enough for multiplication by industry and worthy of benefiting not just the individual but the public as a whole.'

However, this notion was not able to bridge the extensive theoretical and practical uncertainties it glossed over. The involvement of the artist in machine production was not going to be so idyllically clear-cut; this was the very issue that would produce the first, and basic, rift in the Werkbund's unity. At the 1914 Werkbund Congress in Cologne
it was obvious that there were two camps facing each other. One of these shared Mutheslus's views: 'Architecture and the entire sphere of activity of the Werkbund tend towards standardization. It is only by standardization that they can recover that universal importance which they possessed in ages of harmonious civilization. Only by standardization ... as a salutary concentration of forces can a generally accepted and reliable taste be introduced.' Meanwhile Henry van de Velde, representing the opposition, passionately declaimed: 'As long as there are artists in the Werkbund ... they will protest against any proposed canon and standardization. The artist is essentially and intimately a passionate individualist, a spontaneous creator. Never will he, of his own free will, submit to a discipline forcing upon him a norm, a canon.'

Gropius's fellow architect, Endell, and some 25-30 other Werkbund members whom Gropius refers to as the 'opposition', were ready to sharpen the conflict: either Muthesius should resign, or else they would. They resented the relegation of the artist's role to the background, and even 'the use of the soulless term "standardization" created the most violent opposition. This intimidating word, with its Greek root and Franco-German ending (Typisierung). does not really enlighten us about how and when it ought to be used.'

The Werkbund debate was the clash of the same forces that collided in subsequent conflicts at the Bauhaus: the polarization of artistic individuality versus the increasing depersonalization of mass production became defined as one of the fundamental conflicts of the age. In prophetically summarizing the essentials of the debate, August Endell was actually forecasting an outline of the eventual developments at the Bauhaus. In conclusion to the 1914 debate he wrote:

The Werkbund is faced with an important decision to choose its aim: quality and standardization, or the serious involvement of beauty and the artist as equal partners in industry. The Werkbund will have a viable future only if it decides in favour of the latter. If it chooses the murky and ambiguous terms quality and standardization, the Werkbund will expose itself to the danger of sinking to the level of a mere organ of the ethical-cultural advertising so popular these days. Not even those manufacturers with business reasons for the artist's collaboration would agree to this, for they see that, although the artist is barely tolerated in the Werkbund, he is most suitably qualified for advertisements of that sort.

As we shall see, many of Gropius's later decisions, seemingly completely irrational at the time, originated from this position statement of the Werkbund leadership: never, under any circumstances, would they grant absolute priority to the machine, or recognize it as an end in itself. This viewpoint was all the more heroic in that all practical considerations, as well as the rationalism so inseparable from machine production, point in the opposite direction. In 1914, on the eve of the war, the Intellectual leaders of the Werkbund demonstrated that even though they - being competent technicians - were fully aware of the positive aspects and natural history of mechanical production, they held it most important for the future that the human factor should not be relegated to the background. It was a basic issue of survival affecting all of human culture that technology should in no way pose a threat to the freedom of human inventiveness and imagination. The situation was already approaching a crisis; in the words of Theodor Fischer: 'Industry has lost sight of its aim of producing work of the highest quality and does not feel itself to be a serving member of our community but the ruler of the age.'

Gropius's earliest writings attest to the special attention he devoted to this problem. Already in 1910 he was preoccupied with the thought of 'the prosperous union of art and technology', and it seems that in his writings - with the help of his extraordinary
diplomatic gifts, and regardless of the inner logic of his arguments - he attempted to bridge and resolve the contradictions that first polarized within the Werkbund.

By virtue of his personality and aptitudes, his social and public position, Gropius seemed predestined for a leading role. He was resolute, clear-sighted in pinpointing problems and resilient in debate, had an excellent intuitive grasp of a situation, and displayed a fundamentally farsighted optimism and extraordinary organizing ability. He was able to remain detached from every conflict, and maintained a coolly correct attitude even in situations that involved him personally. (Perhaps this is why Klee later called him 'The Silver Prince'.) He needed a base of operations under his autonomous direction. This is also how he was perceived by Henry van de Velde, director of the Weimar Grand Ducal School of Arts and Crafts, who, as a Belgian citizen, had to resign after the war broke out. In 1915 he recommended Gropius, along with Hermann Obrist and August Endell, as his successor. The ruler of Weimar, the Grand Duke of Saxony, had been urging since 1913 that the otherwise unexceptionable van de Velde be replaced by a German director working 'in the spirit of the new nationalism', someone who would follow the more desirable neo-Biedermeier and neo-classicist trends which were deemed more autochthonously German than the cosmopolitan Sezession style. Van de Velde, who had no knowledge of the Grand Duke's personal tastes, was mainly motivated by Gropius's innate qualifications for leadership (although he must have been familiar with the Fagus Shoe Factory, and the factory building designed for the 1914 Cologne Werkbund Exhibition), as can be seen from the question he asked in his letter informing Gropius about his nomination: 'Where and in what periodicals can I find publications of your works?'

Gropius recognized the extraordinary opportunity presented by van de Velde's offer. He immediately travelled to Weimar, where the Grand Duke received him, but negotiations had to be suspended because of the war. Gropius was called up for active service, and the building of the School of Arts and Crafts was converted into a military hospital.

Nonetheless, from the battlefield in 1916 he sent a memorandum entitled 'Proposals for the Establishment of an Institute Offering Artistic Direction to Industry, Applied Art and Crafts' to the Grand Ducal Ministry of State. In this writing he outlined the ideas he had developed in response to the prewar Werkbund debates: his proposal was aimed at the ways and means of reconciling the mutually conflicting interests of large-scale industry and commerce on the one hand, and artistic and craft activity on the other. He conceived of a new kind of institution, a coordinating way-station of sorts, which would ensure that the articles to be manufactured combined the advantages of mass production with a high level of aesthetic value, by providing a common ground where the quantitative criteria of technological production could encounter that elusive qualitative extra that we like to call the artist's personality.

Although this text was composed in its entirety on the battlefield, Groplus failed to take into account the fact of the war itself; he assumed an industry of undiminished power, a balanced society and unabated technological progress. Meanwhile it was precisely the upheaval caused by the war that occasioned the passage of these 'Proposals' into the Grand Duke's hands. This was an age racked by the fever pitch of technological revolution, the fervour of 'Americanization', while marking time, vegetating, in the throes of the war in a state of heightened malleability. The age was receptive to considering any innovative system. As a matter of fact, given the Irrationality of the war, almost any concept, no matter how fantastic, would have received a serious hearing;
Gropius’s ideas had the advantage of being quite sensible. ‘The old-fashioned craftsman combined in his person the technician, the merchant and the artist. If we now omit the artist from this triad, then the machine-made product will be nothing but an inferior substitute of the handcrafted item. But commercial circles are well aware of the surplus value contributed to industry by the artist’s spiritual labour.’\cite{18} In reformulating the position taken by Ender and the other Werkbund leaders, Gropius was demonstrating that he was, in the strictest sense, a more level-headed and circumspect successor to van de Velde. The participation of the artist in production was seen as the ultimate guarantee of the product’s quality. ‘Today all of industry must take seriously the task of considering artistic values. The manufacturer has to be careful to avoid the stigma of his products appearing to be mere substitutes, and should endow them with the noble aspects of handcrafted goods, while keeping the advantages of machine production ... Only the artist is capable of breathing a soul into the inert machine-made object; it is the artist’s creative power that survives in the object as live leavening.’\cite{19} This viewpoint, held by the Werkbund and Gropius, evinced a classical sense of ethics that would be within Gropius’s lifetime mercilessly invalidated by economic considerations, so that the humanistic restraint of technological progress, the limitation of profits or account of human factors, would remain a Utopia, the purest Utopia of the Bauhaus. That which Gropius labelled the ‘stigma of ersatz substitutes’ would, not much later, reappear billed as triumphant innovations, splendid cost-diminishing or profit-increasing factors, while quality as an ethical concept was laid to rest once and for all.

Gropius and his like-minded fellow members of the Werkbund carried on and even enhanced the Sezessionist longing for a new style that would apply to all of material culture, and that would characterize a whole period. Gropius and his colleagues considered industrial production itself to be a potential cultural outlet, and strove to bring about the manufacture of products that were repositories of aesthetic content, to the point where even a ventilator, a cooking utensil or an automobile would represent German culture to the extent that a painting or a poem does.\footnote{17} At the same time in his 'Proposals' Gropius also indicated that he intended to pay attention to the requirements of industry. He wrote, for instance, that the greatest care must be taken in selecting the applicants for admission to the new institute 'so that tangible results may be shown as soon as possible'.\footnote{20} In spite of the fact that he was talking about a school which, because of its very nature, must make long-term plans, he made sure to refer to the basic expectation of the investors: i.e., the speediest return for their investment. This ambivalence of professional, pedagogic and economic values would haunt the Bauhaus for the duration of its existence.

Although it is most difficult, if not impossible, to separate the external/historical from the interior/subjective human factors and the roles that they played in the fate of the Bauhaus, the history of this institution suggests that the dream of a humanistic technological culture received its death blow from both directions. External factors - the ongoing political strife - never allowed the Bauhaus a moment of respite to become a freely creative educational institution unfettered by budgetary worries, with the luxury of the right to commit an occasional mistake. Such independence remained a dream to the end; even the prospect of purchasing it at a financial cost glimmered on the horizon only at rare moments. Whereas on the subjective side, the involvement of the artist in the humanization of technology was hindered by the rudimentary, immature state of theory
and practice, and the vacuum existing between the personal artistic make-up of the Bauhaus masters and the designated common goal.

Gropius himself saw the future unequivocally in terms of the gains to be made in the design and manufacture of standardized mass-produced items. His prewar writings all point in this direction. A glance at the titles is enough: A Travelling Exhibition of Modern Factory Architecture (1911), Monumental Art and Industrial Architecture (1911), Are Aesthetic Criteria Reconcilable with Practical and Commercial Viewpoints in the Construction of Industrial Buildings? (1912), The Development of Modern Industrial Architecture (1913), and The Style-creating Power of Industrial Architectural Forms (1914). Throughout all of these writings he persisted in his belief that the design of factory-made products and the creative work of the individuated, independent artist can be brought to a common denominator. He assumed that the artist would seek participation in such a collective enterprise. Meanwhile one has the feeling that Gropius, when he refers to the artist's involvement in production, fudges the meaning of the word to denote what already at the turn of century was designated by the term designer - Gestalter. For he would have the artist involved in the process of mechanized production just as it was, broken into several phases, whereas the work of the artist is indivisible and constitutes an undivided whole. Elsewhere, in his more Utopian writings, he outlines a state of affairs, existing in a post-mutation society, where the meaning of the word artist would be clarified only in the context of the future, at a time when the newfangled methods of production would have become universal, and the newfangled artist-mutant would be just another link in the process.

When he says artist, Gropius never intends the commonly accepted usage as painter, sculptor or graphic artist, but rather some undefined future descendant of these, as if (and here he is close to László Moholy-Nagy's reasoning of a few years later) the arts of painting, sculpture and graphics were superannuated activities relegated to the past by machine-produced articles. The only part of the artist he would retain is that certain elixir of personal uniqueness and intuition. When he writes, 'The new, enthusiastic, formal expression requires intensive artistic powers, artistic personality', he is obviously thinking of designers: 'Automobile and railroad car, steamship and sailboat, dirigible and airplane ... in their pure forms clearly discernible at a glance both conceal and sum up the complexity of their technical organization. In them, technological and artistic form have matured into an organic whole.' For Gropius, the arts essentially meant this new aesthetic, and most likely the Werkbund's use of the term was very similar. It is unlikely that when van de Velde resisted so emotionally the exclusion of the artist from industrial design, he had intended to clear the way for Klee or Kandinsky's autonomous, metaphysical art - towards the design of electric tea kettles.

The elemental - and, we may as well say, historical - differences between the spheres of technological and autonomous art can be best seen precisely in those instances that promised a realization of their synthesis. In the years following the October revolution, Wassily Kandinsky, Kasimir Malevich, Gustav Klucis and other abstract, Suprematist artists provided decorative motifs for the products of a Petersburg porcelain factory, chiefly teacups and saucers. These objects are valuable documents of an era, and vividly testify to their creators' willingness to participate in the aesthetic transformation of everyday objects, in the creation, according to their lights, of a new aesthetic value for the new man. Meanwhile, with the exception of a few architectonic vessels by Malevich, their decorative motifs float as alien elements, like decals of painterly compositions on the traditional tableware. Had Gropius commissioned these artists to participate in the
work of the porcelain factory, no doubt he would have had them design new forms out of new materials to fulfil new functions, but it is by no means certain that the artists would have accepted a task requiring technical know-how beyond their command.

22 At the same time Gropius never even entertained the thought that there could still be artists unaffected by technological progress. He firmly believed there was no higher artistic task, no work more exalted, timely or appropriate for the artist, than bringing aesthetic quality to mass production, a blessing for everyone. This would mean Americanism domesticated and tamed, transfused with a new soul, filtered through the sieve of European culture. In his photo collection at the time Gropius cherished an image of American wheat silos, constructed along perfectly functionalist lines. This was progress indeed: architectural design of a high quality, perfectly rational, free of 'artistic' frills, and therefore aesthetically appealing. Such design, moreover, stood for ethical values, since it served a functional purpose for the benefit of the community. On this avenue of progress Gropius glimpsed endless vistas of prosperity for all of society.

NOTES

4. Ibid.
6. Ibid.
7. Braun-Feldweg, op. cit., pp. 42 and 44.
8. Gropius, 'Die Entwicklung moderner Industriebaukunst'; in Probst and Schädlich (eds), op. cit., p. 55. Cf. Peter Behrens, 'Kunst und Technik'; in Elektrotechnische Zeitschrift 31, no. 22, June 1916, pp. 552-5: 'Nothing great which has been created in life has ever resulted from conscientious professionalism; on the contrary, it has been due to the enterprise of great and powerful personalities.' Quoted by Marcel Franciscono, Walter Gropius and the Creation of the Bauhaus in Weimar. University of Illinois Press, Champaign, 1971, pp. 72-3.
11. Ibid., p. 271. Probably August Endell's comment on the Werkbund Congress.
12. Ibid., p. 274.
13. Pevsner, op. cit., p. 29.
19. Ibid.
20. Ibid.
22. László Moholy-Nagy, Malerei, fotografie, film, Bauhausbücher no. 8, 1927.
Chapter 2. Time out of Joint

1. THE FIRST WORLD WAR postponed dreams of progress and prosperity for all of society light-years away into the future. Germany lost the war in 1918, and after the November revolution the country was rid of the Kaiser and the institution of the Empire. The troops dispatched to put down the October revolt of the fleet in Kiel joined the mutineers, whereupon sailors' and workers' councils came to power. The revolution spread to the great port of Hamburg, followed by Hanover and Braunschweig; on 7 November the head of the Independent Socialist Party, Kurt Eisner, assumed leadership of the uprising in Munich, and in Berlin the steel workers organized a mass demonstration. On 9 November Friedrich Ebert, president of the Majority Socialist Party, became the new chancellor of the nation. On the same day Scheidemann, the party's other leader, announced the proclamation of the Republic in the presence of a vast crowd assembled in front of the Reichstag. Meanwhile the soldiers returning in closed ranks from the front, 'undefeated in battle', were greeted by exultant masses at the train terminals. The German High Command assured Ebert of the army's support. The Kaiser abdicated and left the country. 'It was a brief period of euphoria when ... the proclamation of the republic was generally celebrated.'

2. But the accord did not last for long: the left-wing radicals of the Independent Socialist Party, the Spartacists among them, demanded a Socialist republic, and meant to escalate the revolution into a dictatorship of the proletariat, which was opposed by the majority. In January 1919 a new revolutionary wave inundated Berlin, and the leftists demanded the resignation of the chief of police. In the meantime the right-wing Socialists were recruiting vigilantes known as Freikorps, using these to reoccupy the government buildings on 11 January, and to arrest the two most important revolutionary leaders, Rosa Luxemburg and Karl Liebknecht, who were then murdered 'while attempting to escape'. There seemed to be no end to the state of anarchy: the assassination of Kurt Eisner in Bavaria set off a new revolutionary movement that led to the proclamation of the Bavarian Soviet Republic on 7 April. This was suppressed after bloody massacres. Meanwhile in Berlin a new revolutionary upheaval left one thousand dead. The Majority Socialist Party, led by Chancellor Friedrich Ebert, now summoned a national constitutional assembly, which convened in Weimar from 19 January until the summer, evolving the constitution of the Weimar Republic, and opening a new era in German history.
3 After the shock of the war, in the midst of the revolutionary events in Berlin, the artist-intelligentsia lived in a kind of narcosis composed of poverty and indulgence in unrealistic other-worldly dreams. Notions of a German renewal mingled with news of the Russian revolution and the illusions nourished by these. In the words of György Lukács, during these months 'there was a widespread belief that we were at the beginning of a vast revolutionary wave which would flood all of Europe within a few years. We laboured under the illusion that within a short time we would be able to mop up the last remnants of capitalism.\textsuperscript{1} René Schickele expresses the general euphoria of the age, and a sense of the disjointed time: 'The new world has begun. It is here: mankind liberated! A face appears in the atmospheric maelstrom of anxiety and lies: the face of Man. The face of a creature bathed in heavenly light... At last he can begin his work. The Man. At last... Now! Let us begin afresh, freed from the burden of the Middle Ages. Let us create the Man of Modern Times. Forward!'\textsuperscript{2}

4 In the revolutionary centres the artists consolidated themselves into radical groups, associations and organizations. In the winter of 1918-19 the Arbeitsrat für Kunst (Work Council for the Arts) was formed in Berlin along the pattern of the workers' and soldiers' councils, providing artists and architects with a new forum for the evolution and propagation of the theories and aesthetics of the new art and architecture.

5 At the outset the Arbeitsrat was headed by a four-man committee with Gropius as one of the members. Later Bruno Taut became its president.\textsuperscript{3}

6 Already in 1914 Taut had published a revolutionary appeal in Der Sturm: he was the first to describe the new mission of architecture in incandescently exalted Romantic tones. 'Let us build together a magnificent building! A building which will not be architecture alone, but in which everything - painting, sculpture, everything together - will create a grand architecture, and in which architecture will once again merge with the other arts. Architecture will here be frame and content all at once.'\textsuperscript{4}

7 In 1918 Gropius and Taut collaboratively composed the text of the Arbeitsrat manifesto, the 'Architecture Programme':

8 The building is the Immediate bearer of spiritual powers, creator of sensations. Only a total revolution of the spirit will create this building... The beginning of large People's Houses, not in the cities but on open land in conjunction with housing developments... These buildings... cannot stand in the city because it, rotten in itself, will perish just as the old power. The future lies in the newly developed land, which will nourish itself.\textsuperscript{5}

9 The shock of the war, followed by the ecstatic events of revolutionary weeks - the 'time out of joint' - offered an exceptional vantage from where past and future appeared in a similar light, so that the deepest traditions of the German Middle Ages, that of the itinerant communities of builders, seemed just as relevant as the programme for building small housing units by mechanized processes in the future. A similar moment and special vantage point had also occurred in the history of the Russian avant-garde: around 1910-11 Mikhail Larionov, Natalia Goncharova and the young Malevich dipped into the oldest layers of Russian folk art tradition in a radically innovative gesture, with the motto, 'Our future is behind us!' Gropius arrived at similar conclusions - which must have been strongly influenced by the ideas of the Blaue Reiter circle about reunifying the arts - when, in his 1916 'Proposals', after a detailed exposition of how the proposed school would fit into the context of factory production, industry and commerce, he abruptly slipped the constraints of reality and turned to the past for his depiction of the future:
We could again establish a prosperous working community similar to those medieval builders' workshops we so fondly long for, where architects, sculptors—all sorts of artisans belonging to many guilds—would coexist, autonomously accomplishing their portion of the common task. Imbued by the same spirit, full of understanding and respect for the unity of that single, common ideal whose meaning pervades them and fills their being.

In the Arbeitsrat the architect Otto Bartning elaborated a plan for training in the arts and crafts. He proposed the abolition of professorships, and the restoration of the old master/apprentice relationship, with the renewed usage of these terms. This would clearly demarcate the new style of education from the conservative majority of society. The term 'conservative' referred to the bourgeois value system; in art it meant the Academy. To turn towards the Middle Ages was now an innovative, avant-garde gesture.

In 1918, when in the iridescent light of the historically disjointed times this vision of the potential and necessary synthesis of medieval German art—more precisely the Gothic style that had pervaded all media—and the new art linked to the making of a new world loomed up for Taut and Gropius, they were not introducing a new idea into German culture. It was rather as if they were making way for the full onslaught of an artistic and intellectual current that had been present for decades in German cultural life. Wagner's notion of a Gesamtkunstwerk had at an earlier time stirred up the most far-reaching waves among the members of the Blaue Reiter group (who could 'hear the apocalyptic horsemen in the air'). Besides voicing their vision of the unification of the arts, they were also the most outspoken expositors of the transcendence of art beyond material realities, of art's responsibility to render the spiritual distillate, the dematerialized intellectual version of the material world. This idea, embodied as a formal motif, may be seen throughout the art of the period, and not only in Germany. Larionov and Goncharova in Russia, Robert Delaunay in France, Erich Heckel and Franz Marc in Germany—all undertook a new type of painterly representation of light itself. This type of painting, which dissolved and spiritualized forms, abolished the materiality of objects and focused on the optical refraction of light rays and their effective breaking up of objects, enabled the painter to create transcendental visions without relying on amateurish hallucinatory effects: after all, the artist was capturing an actual natural phenomenon, a certain optical effect. It was the painter's real-life observation of the way light rearranges and recreates the visual world; the artist merely heightened the effect by, as it were, interposing a virtual prism between the human eye and the natural object, and capturing the ensuing spectacle, broken into prismatic, crystalline sheaves of light on the canvas. This transcendence over and above reality aimed at nothing less than the birth of a new spirituality, a new religion.

These were the painters Franz Marc had in mind when he wrote, in 1912: 'Their thinking has a different aim: to create out of their work symbols for their own time, symbols that belong on the altars of a future spiritual religion, symbols behind which the technical heritage cannot be seen.' (Emphasis added.) This new spirituality was heading in precisely the opposite direction, away from Gropius, intending to unfold in a sphere set apart from technology, which it emphatically rejected, recognizing 'the beginning of a new epoch in painting ... the mystical Inner construction, which is the great problem of our generation.' Mysticism was awakened in the souls and with it the most ancient elements of art.

Among the architects Bruno Taut was the most receptive to this motif: almost contemporaneously with these paintings that depicted fragments of reality dissolved in
crystalline light he designed 'The Artists' Glass Palace' for the 1914 Werkbund exhibition. Multicoloured glass panes on the building's prismatic dome reflected light in every direction so that the structure itself seemed to be dissolving in light. Taut rejected the notion of functionalism; his interest lay exclusively in sacral, symbolic buildings that were the earthly stand-ins for transcendent ideas; any other kind of edifice he considered to be necessary but distasteful. Among the architects Bruno Taut was the true man of the times; Gropius, affected by the times, came under the influence of Taut, and it was mostly under this influence that he composed, in the 1919 catalogue to the 'Unknown Architects' exhibition in Berlin, what became one of the first versions of his later Bauhaus Manifesto, in which he calls architecture 'the crystallized expression of mankind's noblest thoughts'. In the second part of his text, however, he sounds a practical and realistic note: '[Let us have] a clear watershed between dream and reality, between aspiring to the stars and workaday life. Architects, sculptors, painters - all of us must return to craftsmanship!'

In December 1918 Gropius, who was proving to be the better organizer, was elected president of the Arbeitsrat to succeed Bruno Taut. Even in these troubled times, Gropius had precise strategic ideas. In one of his letters he wrote: 'The atmosphere at the Arbeitsrat is refreshingly radical, and we are indeed going to get some work done. I am certain that soon we shall present important proposals, and accomplish positive results. Given the current political situation, it is very important that our energies be not scattered, but should unite in one main stream. By now just about every radical artist and friend of the arts who is of any importance has joined us, and we surely represent a certain amount of clout.'

After his long quest, Gropius was glad to have found the task ready-made for his personality, where he could demonstrate how fundamentally he had come to revise his earlier, one-sidedly functionalist approach:

The 'Arbeitsrat fur Kunst' gives me real joy. I have turned the whole thing upside down since I became chairman and have created a very interesting lively thing out of it... All important modern artists, architects, painters, sculptors under one cover... all come to the meetings and that is incredibly beautiful and animating... This is the type of life I have always had in mind, but the cleansing effect of the war was necessary for it. The effect of all that inner suffering during the war has been to
convert me from Saul to Paul. On my return home, psychically devastated by the horrors of the battlefield, I plunged into intellectual life, and today I have the satisfaction of stating that in this relatively short amount of time I not only managed to stay afloat, but have actually conquered new territories. Today I know that this was only possible because deep down I have changed completely and have become attuned to the new things that are bursting forth with tremendous energy.

16 The war and the subsequent period of euphoria led for a brief time to the illusion that the course of history had been turned about. At an earlier stage in his career Gropius had made a level-headed appraisal of the expectable consequences of technological growth, and turned his wholehearted attention as architect towards the expectable innovations promised by continuing technological advances. Subsequent events rendered this sober prewar architectural-engineering appraisal invalid; during the war, technology had revealed its destructive aspect. The apocalyptic spirit of the day now rechannelled Gropius’s thinking. Muthesius and his theories had vanished from the horizon, along with the shattered German industry. Events had proved that material objects were perishable. 'Cultural values are the only goods our enemies cannot take away from us,' was the conclusion Gropius drew in September 1919.

17 The Novembergruppe gathered a broader spectrum of artists than the Arbeitsrat, attracting, among others, writers, filmmakers, theatre people and musicians. It sponsored radio programmes and films along with other events. Brecht, Viking Eggeling, Walter Ruttmann and Erich Mendelsohn were members, as well as Klee, Kandinsky and Gropius. In the group’s manifesto the words LIBERTY, EQUALITY, FRATERNITY appear in capital letters, as their motto for the creation of a ‘young and free Germany’.

18 Given the broad spectrum of artistic organizations, the Arbeitsrat and the Novembergruppe evinced the most peaceful intentions and the most constructive approach. All around them the Berlin of 1918-19 resounded with the clamour of Dadaist manifestos and proclamations, and the diverse manifestations of anarchist and radical artists’ groups that were expressly anti-bourgeois and basically anti-art (since they held art to be a petit-bourgeois phenomenon). The proclamation, 'What Is Dadaism and What Does It Want in Germany?', signed by prominent Dadaists Raoul Hausmann, Richard Huelsenbeck and Jefim Golyscheff, announced the following programme:

(1) The union of the creative and intellectual people of the world along the lines of a radical communism. (2) The introduction of growing unemployment as a consequence of thoroughgoing automation of all activities. Only unemployment can give a person the opportunity to ascertain the truth of life, and to get used to this experience. (3) The immediate expropriation of private property (nationalization); the communistic provisioning of everyone with food; the establishment of light- and garden-cities that teach people to be free.

19 The Dadaists regarded the Expressionists as one of their chief enemies, believing them to be catering to bourgeois tastes, and bombarding them with mercilessly scornful and stinging broadsides. 'Expressionism, that pseudo-theosophist-German tea party which
Taut intended to guard the flame of higher spirituality in architecture, and to pass it on for the future, through this group. At a time of darkness and chaos he longed to work, and instead of indulging in the common complaints, he sought to establish a professional community during a period when no work was foreseeable for who knew how long. In his first circular of 19 December 1919 he writes, 'Let us consciously be "imaginary architects"! Away with individualism, let us climb higher, let architecture again occupy those heights where the Master is anonymous... Let us not inquire about the maker's identity but rejoice instead, that in the far distance, independent of us, the idea lives on.'

Bruno Taut proposed that members of the Chain should, at frequent intervals, prepare architectural plans, and send blueprints to every other member, so that they could mutually criticize and discuss each other's work.

The correspondence went on for eleven months. The initial fervour was followed by the gradual exhaustion of the faith and energies invested in the venture, casting the brief history of the Glass Chain in the light of an overture to the grand opera in five acts known as the Bauhaus. Traces of the secret mutual admiration society, however, followed the members of the Chain in their careers. In letters to each other they continued to use their pseudonyms and, like members of a secret masonic lodge, they could count on the aid and confidential advice of their fellows in times to come.

NOTES

5. The members of the committee were: César Klein, Otto Bartning, Adolf Behne and Walter Gropius; later A. Behne became secretary and B. Taut, president. See Isaacs, op. cit., p. 195.
7. Taut, 'Architekturprogramm'; quoted by Isaacs (1991), op. cit., p. 64.
11. Cf. Erich Heckel, 'Crystalline Sun'. 1913; the Rayonist (in Russian, 'Luchist') works by Larionov and Goncharova; the late paintings by Franz Marc, such as 'Rain', 1912. 'Tyrol'. 1913; the Orphist works by Robert and Sonia Detaunay; August Macke, 'Bathing Girls with Urban Background'. 1913, etc.
15. Franciscono, op. cit., p. 102; see also Taut, 'Die Stadtkrone', Jena, 1919.
22. 'Was ist der Dadaismus und was will er in Deutschland?' 1919; in Schneede (ed.), op. cit., p. 26.
Chapter 3. 'We Shall Draw Grand Designs...

1 GROPIUS did not receive a response to his 'Proposals' written in 1916. The stand taken by the Grand Ducal State Ministry Department of the Interior was rather unfavourable: it found that Gropius's plans 'outline only a tenuous relationship with the crafts'. The letter sent by the State Ministry to Fritz Mackensen, director of the Academy of Fine Arts, concludes that 'We cannot overlook the fact that this "Proposal" is more concerned with the unification of industry and art, rather than with the crafts that are so much more essential for us, and to which it pays less attention than our obligations in this direction would necessitate ... We deem it worth considering: wouldn't our purposes be served better by a resumption of our negotiations with the architect Endell?' However, nothing further was done until the end of the war.

2 In January 1919, upon the intercession and urging of the writer Ernst Hardt, recently appointed director of the Weimar Theatre, Gropius again approached Baron von Fritsch. By this time Gropius was preoccupied exclusively with the idea of a workshop formed along the pattern of medieval builders' guilds composed of like-minded artists and architects. He recognized the opportunity of realizing this concept in a smaller, more compact and more easily surveyable form than the Arbeitsrat, in a manner, moreover, that allowed the possibility of getting work done - at Weimar.

3 The fortuitous course of events favoured Gropius. In 1917 the faculty of the Weimar Academy of Art had submitted a petition to the State Ministry, stating their belief that the German art academies had fallen behind the times. 'The academies should no longer serve merely the so-called fine arts but should also offer the applied arts a basis for existence which the schools of arts and crafts cannot provide satisfactorily, since they look at art from much too low a level, namely that of generalization.' To this end they requested the establishment at the academy of new departments in architecture and the applied arts, including specialists competent to teach the theatre arts and glass-painting.

4 It was the unanimous desire of the professors at the Academy of Art that Weimar, having traditionally played an outstanding role in German culture, should continue as a leader in the reform of art education and in the postwar renaissance, while this cultural rejuvenation would contribute, by means of developing the crafts and applied arts, to the
town's economic prosperity. 'Now the moment for integration has come and should not be passed over. No other academy in Germany has a structure that lends itself to integration as this one does.' By taking this stand, the Weimar Academy had anticipated many other similar institutions, for one year later, after the war, numerous schools followed their example. 'Contrary to a general assumption, even the most conservative intellectuals placed themselves in 1918-19 on "the platform of realities": that is, they accepted the new political situation. Some actually outdid the Left in clamouring for a "socialist" Germany of their own imagination.'

Gropius's reappearance in 1919 found the ground prepared for precisely his plans and ideas. After his first negotiations in Weimar, he wrote in a letter: 'I travelled here without too much enthusiasm; however, my radical plans met with such support from the masters and students of the Art Academy that I have hopes now of their realization. I have been offered the directorship of the Academy of Fine Arts as well. But I stipulated tough conditions for accepting it: above all else, the approval of my radical innovations. There is an interregnum now, until Greater Thuringia comes into being, and under these temporary conditions perhaps I will be able to achieve something if I have the full support of the faculty and students.'

Indeed, this happened to be a time of interregnum in Weimar: the Grand Duke had departed after the proclamation of the Republic in November 1918, and Weimar became the capital of the Free State of Saxony-Weimar, the territory of which coincided with the territory of the Grand Duchy. Its government was taken over by the provisional Republican government under the leadership of August Baudert of the Majority Socialist Party, also a member of the revolutionary Workers' and Soldiers' Council. In his letter Gropius referred to what eventually took place on 1 May 1920: the small Thuringian states were unified into the state of Thuringia (Land Thüringen). Until then, however, along with the temporary government, there remained the Court Chamberlain's Office, directed by Baron von Fritsch, whose decisions had to be approved by the Majority Socialist Party and the Independent Socialist Party.

Gropius did not want to be merely chairman of a department of architecture and applied arts to be established at the already existing Art Academy. Instead, he proposed the integration of the Academy of Art and the defunct School of Applied Arts, the new institute to be called 'Staatliches Bauhaus in Weimar'. On 16 March the Chamberlain's Office announced its agreement to the amalgamation. On 20 March, the Academy's faculty expressed its desire to name the new school Staatliches Bauhaus in Weimar (unified former Grand Ducal Academy of Art and Grand Ducal School of Applied Arts). On 25 March the government announced its concurrence, having consulted Wilhelm von Bode, Director of the Berlin Museums, who not only approved, but considered the appointment of an architect to head an academy of art to be in line with the new spirit of the changed times.
The Chamberlain's Office was unwilling to accept the new name. Nonetheless, the contract was signed on 1 April 1919, naming Walter Gropius Director of the Academy of Art and of the School of Applied Arts. To this effect, Baron von Fritsch handed Gropius his appointment to the directorial chair of the Staatliches Bauhaus in Weimar, even though the designation itself was accepted, reluctantly, by the Chamberlain's Office only on 11 April, upon the emphatic urging of the Social Democratic government.

The compromise name proposed by the Art Academy faculty well illustrates the dichotomy that contained the budding conflict between the Bauhaus and the town of Weimar. The faculty's confidence in Gropius, as well as its desire and ambition to partake in the postwar renewal, were naturally coupled with their commitment to the fostering of academic traditions of painting and to the history of the community. Ultimately they did not mean to bring about changes in their own pedagogic or artistic approaches; in fact they had not meant to change, but merely to expand the Academy. Obviously they must have completely misunderstood this forceful young architect, with his conformist appearance, who in spite of his youth had such a glowing reputation. They must have believed that this scion of a highly regarded old Berlin family would Inject only as many drops of the new spirit as suited their notions, introducing a few innovations while carrying on business as usual. In the end Gropius won the approval of the State Ministry upon the resignation of van de Velde because 'his furniture and interior designs submitted to the Grand Duke were found to be of a desirably neo-classical style.'

Gropius was introduced to members of the Weimar intellectual and political circles on 13 April at a tea-party at Ernst Hardt's, where leading artists, musicians and government officials had been Invited to meet Walter Gropius. In his letter thanking him for the invitation, Gropius, seeking an ally in Hardt, writes:
I come to Weimar full of excitement and with the firm intention of creating one great Whole, or else, falling that, to disappear quickly. This day and age, so extraordinarily exciting and pregnant with ideas, is at last ripe to bear something new and positive; this throb in the air everywhere. For us, kindred spirits, remains the task of truly desiring to bring about something grand; our intellectual cooperation must succeed, in spite of material obstacles... I have large-scale ideas for Weimar... Namely, that Weimar, precisely because of its world fame, is the most suitable ground for laying the cornerstone of a coming Republic of the Spirit. Let us therefore create an idea that we shall promulgate with every means of publicity at our disposal... I have decided that at my art institute, together with our faculty and students, we shall draw grand designs, and also propagate them. Naturally the most important task is to invite strong, vital personalities to join us. We must not meddle with mediocrities, but must do everything within our means to attract significant, well-known personages, even if deep down we do not as yet fully comprehend them. I wholeheartedly Implore you to keep this in mind when considering which musicians to invite to Weimar. This will have wide-ranging repercussions in all respects. Such decisions should not be made on the basis of friendships or social contacts since they have immediate cultural Implications. When a Schönberg or a Pfitzner visits Weimar, the whole world is aware of it, and important persons like that will attract other important people to sojourn here for shorter or longer periods... In everything I intend to do I am especially counting on you... Let us help each other; let us will the seemingly Impossible, and I am certain that we shall succeed.11

As already mentioned, this hectic and ideologically burdened period proved - with its dark economic realities and 'inflationary saints'12 - to be a sidetrack in Gropius's career, just as it was in the fate of the nation. The concept and stylistic ideal of functionalism, the rationalist notion of pure utility, had for the time being lost its hard edges, swallowed up within the agitated, emotionally charged dream-state that kept the German art community in a state of tension. When he was later asked about the April 1919 Bauhaus Manifesto, this rousing summons so different in its tone and thrust from his earlier or later statements, Gropius, looking back in 1964, replied to Tomás Maldonado that 'one had to be familiar with the spirit of those times' in order to understand this manifesto. 'Back in those days, an objective appeal to an objective task would never have reached all those young people brimming over with new ideas and the desire to realize them. The success of the Manifesto speaks for itself; young people flocked to us from home and abroad, not to design "correct" table lamps, but to participate in a community that wanted to create a new man in a new environment.'13

In no way did Gropius reject his identity as the architect who designed the Fagus Shoe Factory and the building of the Werkbund Exhibition - no matter how attuned he now seemed to the wavelength of Gothic-Expressionist symbolism. The war had broken the continuity of life and ideas: from the perspective of the still raw war trenches. Tout's Crystal Palace was not a whit less probable than a lamp factory designed along elegant lines of a salutary rationality. Considering Gropius's personal career, the declamatory, Expressionist tone of 1919-20, in spite of the fundamental stylistic and ideological differences from his other writings and architectural designs - no matter how paradoxical this seems - is still proof of his Integrity, since it shows how Gropius obeyed the historical imperatives of the day, just as he had earlier, and would in times to come.

In the Bauhaus Manifesto Gropius, appealing to potential Bauhaus students in an elevated prose, full of emotion, formulated the mature statement of his programme, which had seen earlier versions:14
The ultimate aim of all visual arts is the complete building! To embellish buildings was once the noblest function of the fine arts; they were the indispensable components of great architecture. Today the arts exist in isolation from which they can be rescued only through the conscious, cooperative effort of all craftsmen. Architects, painters and sculptors must recognize anew and learn to grasp the composite character of a building both as an entity and in its separate parts. Only then will their work be imbued with the architectonic spirit which if has lost as 'salon art'.

The old schools of art were unable to produce this unity, since art cannot be taught. They must be merged once more with the workshop. The mere drawing and painting world of the pattern designer and the applied artist must become a world that builds again. When young people who take a joy in artistic creation once more begin their life's work by learning a trade, then the unproductive 'artist' will no longer be condemned to deficient artistry, for their skill will be now be preserved for the crafts, in which they will be able to achieve excellence.

Architects, sculptors, painters, we all must return to the crafts! For art is not a 'profession'. There is no essential difference between the artist and the craftsman. The artist is an exalted craftsman. In rare moments of inspiration, transcending the consciousness of his will, the grace of heaven may cause his work to blossom into art. But proficiency in a craft is essential to every artist. Therein lies the prime source of creative imagination.

Let us then create a new guild of craftsmen without the class distinctions that raise an arrogant barrier between craftsman and artist! Together let us desire, conceive and create the new structure of the future, which will embrace architecture and sculpture and painting in one unity and which will one day rise towards heaven from the hands of a million workers like the crystal symbol of a new faith.\textsuperscript{13}

The Manifesto, its cover decorated by Feininger's woodcut, 'The Socialist Cathedral', illuminated by a five-pointed star, soars from the humble revival of the crafts to the ecstatic vision of the crystal cathedral, calling for a new guild system that will harmonize the various crafts side by side, since what rises above them - apart from art born at the rare moments of inspired clarity - must be the result of their combined efforts. This Image of a community appears democratic not only because it recognizes the equality of the various crafts and craftsmen, but also because of the basically democratic situation of starting anew: everyone would start a new leaf and possess an equal opportunity of contributing to the creation of a new way of life. Although the passionate tone of the Manifesto is deeply rooted in the period, its poetic style - while we must acknowledge the sincerity of Gropius's idealism - also promoted its general acceptance. 'Craftsmanship', 'the great building', and 'rare moments of inspiration' meant different things to different readers: all in all, this manifesto was open to free and loose interpretations. The Weimar town fathers were lulled by the emphatically central role given to craftsmanship, the faculty of the academy by the reverential treatment of art, the lofty aura accorded it, and, as for the radicals - and potential students among them - they could consider the newness of the rational, collective work task as the central theme. So that the Manifesto, precisely because of its poetic qualities, proved to be perfect from a strategic point of view. In it Gropius maintains the balance between the artist and the craftsman by taking the 'professional artist' and, as it were, 'kicking him upstairs', away from the new type of creative-productive work process, and referring him to the sphere where 'the grace of heaven' held sway. This way, while expressing his deepest respect towards the artist, he also made it clear that within the narrower bounds of schoolwork this artistic activity has no real function, 'art cannot be taught'.\textsuperscript{14}
The faculty of the academy gave a warm welcome to Gropius. The Bauhaus regulations took effect on 15 April 1919; on 22 May Gropius officially confirmed in their positions professors Max Thedy, Walther Klemm, Richard Engelmann and Otto Fröhlich from the old faculty, while still having five unfilled faculty positions. The retaining of the former academy's professors and the confirmation of their positions set the Weimar authorities' minds at rest and reassured the professors themselves. The approval of the budget and the confidence placed in Gropius was in large part due to this demonstration of his reliance on these respected and time-tested masters.

Therefore the unease created by his first independent appointments was all the greater. Gerhard Marcks, Lyonel Feininger and Johannes Itten were all names that had become known through their association with the radical Expressionist circle of Der Sturm. They were foreign to Weimar (although Feininger had maintained a studio in Weimar from 1906 to 1914), and as for their artistic ideas, they owed allegiance to 'modernism' - Cubism, Expressionism and abstraction, so alien to the Weimar artistic tradition.

Gropius had known Gerhard Marcks since childhood, and they had already worked together in 1914, when Marcks created ceramic sculptures for the Werkbund exhibition building designed by Gropius. Marcks was the only one among Gropius's newly appointed colleagues who had first-hand experience in factory production: at an earlier date he had designed a series of animal figurines for the Schwarzburg Porcelain factory. He now became the head of the Bauhaus ceramic workshop.

Gropius had encountered the painter Feininger at meetings of the Arbeitsrat and the Novembergruppe. Feininger, the offspring of a German family settled in the United States, had moved back to Germany. He was 48 years old when Gropius invited him to teach painting at the Bauhaus. Twelve years earlier Feininger had been a regular contributor of cartoons and comic strips to the Chicago Tribune and other American newspapers, as well as Ulk in Berlin. His reputation in Germany rested on his paintings, which featured dreamlike, refractive geometric compositions dissolved into expressive visions. After his debut at the famous First German Herbstsalon in 1913, at Herwarth Walden's gallery, he was considered to be one of the leading European painters. It was Feininger's appointment that cost Gropius the loss of the trust and sympathy the Court Chamberlain's Office had advanced him. At the outset, Marcks's gothically elongated 'Germanic' forms, and Itten's so far unknown activity as a teacher of drawing, had no connotations for the Weimar officialdom; however, Feininger's paintings obviously and most visibly indicated that it was not the spirit of Weimar academic art tradition that he was going to hand down to his students. For the time being, Gropius's opponents held their peace, for rumour had it that his appointment as Director had been urged and approved by the former Grand Duke himself. However, when word got out that this was far from the case, and that Baron von Fritsch had Gropius's appointment confirmed only by the Social Democrats, namely by Baudert, there was an uproar. One year after the opening of the Bauhaus this was still a topic of discussion, and in the course of an emotional exchange of letters with Baron von Fritsch, von Bode waxed indignant: 'Gropius had presented me with a programme that to me appeared a little radical but was quite acceptable in its essential points... And then he started right off with the appointment of that Cubist Feininger!'  

Gropius's third invitation went to Johannes Itten, the Swiss painter and art educator. Since 1916 Itten had been living in Vienna, conducting drawing classes that were becoming increasingly well-known. Alma Mahler, Gropius's wife at the time, called his
attention to the young art teacher with the charismatic personality, and suggested he be invited to join the Bauhaus faculty. All Groplus knew about Itten was that he had a one-man show at Der Sturm gallery, and that his pupils worshipped him. That, along with Alma Mahler's recommendation, was sufficient. However, his wife did warn him in a letter to 'avoid coming under Itten's influence. He will strive very hard, and if he sets his mind to it, he will succeed.' But by that time both men had signed the contract.

NOTES

2. 'Grossherzogliches Staatsministerium, Departement des Inneren und Ausseren, an Professor Fritz Mackensen, Direktor der Hochschule für bildende Kunst', 1 May 1916; in Hüter, op. cit., p. 204.
4. Grand-Ducal Saxon Academy of Art Petition to the Ministry of State Regarding Reform Recommendations from the Faculty in Weimar, 3 October 1917; quoted by Hüter, op. cit., p. 12, and by wingier. op. cit., p. 30.
5. Ibid.
10. Hüter, op. cit., p. 11. (see chapter 1. note 15)
11. Groplus. Letter to Ernst Hardt. 14 April 1919; quoted by Isaacs, op. cit., p. 209. On Schanberg's invitation: Lankheit, 'A History of the Almanac', op. cit., p. 46: 'As we have learned only recently, it was only tragic misunderstanding that prevented Schönberg from going to Weimar and enriching this intellectual, artistic center with music.'
13. Walter Groplus and Tomás Maldonado: an exchange of letters; in Ulm 10/11, Ulm Hochschule für Gestaltung, 1964, pp. 62-70. (Maldonado was at that time director of the Ulm Design Academy, considered to be the successor of the Bauhaus.)
16. Scheidig. op. cit., p. 16.
17. Isaacs, op. cit., p. 213.
19. To Oberhofmarschall Baron von Fritsch; in Wingier. op. cit., p. 33.
Chapter 4. First Steps

1 GROPIUS proceeded in a consistent manner to create the formal elements of a guild-like environment. In the 'Bauhaus Programme', a broadside issued at the same time as the Manifesto, he states that 'The school is the servant of the workshop, and will one day be absorbed in it. Therefore there will be no teachers or pupils in the Bauhaus but masters, journeymen and apprentices.' Gropius had refused the title of professor for himself; as he wrote in a letter: 'I have decided to refrain from indulging in these formal trappings which I consider outmoded.'

2 The keynote document - the Programme - also specifies that students at the Bauhaus would have to pass a guild-like journeyman's examination in front of the Council of Masters, or invited masters, before attaining Mastery, and receiving the Bauhaus Diploma.

3 The activities of the fine arts academy, for the time being within the Bauhaus, continued to progress smoothly. However, the equipping and launching of the School of Applied Arts, which had been completely evacuated, proved much more troublesome - yet this was precisely where the brunt of the Programme's emphasis lay. The School of Applied Arts, which had been suspended for the duration of the war, had still at its disposal unspent endowment funds and subsidies for art patronage, supplemented by donations solicited by Gropius. From April to October one million marks were amassed, which seems like a large amount, in view of the masters' total annual salary payroll of 67,000 marks; however, within two years, in the course of galloping inflation this amount melted into nothing, as did the dreams of financial and artistic independence. In the end, the textile and ceramics workshops could be established only by involving the owners of the equipment in the training. In order to bring in the new ways as planned, Gropius needed not only prominent artists with a modern outlook but expert artisans as well, so that he appointed two instructors for each workshop: an artist, the Formmeister, and an artisan, the Handwerkmeister. The goal - and, in part, this constituted the great experiment of the Bauhaus - was to create in the person of the student an alloy of artist and craftsman, thereby forming a new type of artist-technician, in whom everything learned from the artist and the artisan would ripen into a new kind of knowledge.

4 The artist-teacher of the ceramics workshop was Gerhard Marcks. The workshop itself started functioning only in the summer of 1920, at some distance from the Bauhaus, in
Dornburg an der Saale, 35 kilometres from Weimar. This is where Max Krehan, the last member of a long dynasty of potters, the Handwerkmeister of the workshop, had his studio.

To head the textile workshop, Gropius followed the recommendation of a Weimar painter, Johannes Molzahn, and invited Georg Muche, a young painter from Berlin, to be the Formmeister, while as Handwerkmeister he appointed the same Helene Börner who had headed the workshop under the directorship of van de Velde, and who owned the looms and other equipment. Gropius himself was the artist-instructor of the cabinet-maker shop, along with Josef Zachmann as the crafts instructor; Richard Engelmann conducted the sculpture studio, while painting was taught by the academy's faculty - primarily Max Thedy - although Feininger had some students as well.

Gropius did not teach architecture, but with the collaboration of his associate and draughtsman Adolf Meyer, Herbert Bayer organized an unofficial architectural work group, which was converted by Georg Muche into an architectural study group. Gropius employed several draughtsmen in his private architectural office, Alfréd Forbát and Ernst Neufert among them, and he himself followed with interest the ongoing architectural self-education at the Bauhaus.

Anyone between the ages of 16 and 40 could apply to the Bauhaus, but admission was not easy to obtain. In the course of its life-span, the Bauhaus had a total of 1250 students; usually about a hundred at any one time, and a larger number during the more prosperous periods. Many were admitted conditionally for a half-year probation, after which students were frequently advised not to return. If they stayed on at the Bauhaus, they were required to gain formal admission to the Weimar Chamber of Artisans. Attendance of workshops and lectures by form masters was compulsory, and each stage of the training had to be completed by predetermined deadlines. In order to acquire a sense for everyday realities, students had to do everything possible to create saleable objects. Materials were supplied for free by the school, and everything they made was the property of the Bauhaus, although in the case of a sale, students received a certain percentage as a royalty.

This ingenious system of twofold workshop leadership proved fruitful for the students - the apprentices - in creating a completely new generation of technician-artists, along lines somewhat resembling agricultural plant-breeding methods (a solution that, in spite of its success, later turned into a source of numerous conflicts). However, the system also had its roots in Gropius's own personality and abilities.

In spite of his talents as an architect, and his style-creating powers, Gropius had an undeniable shortcoming: he was unable to draw. Even as a student, he had hired a draughtsman, and was forced to interrupt his studies repeatedly. In 1907 he wrote to his mother: 'My absolute inability to bring even the simplest design to paper is casting a shadow on many otherwise beautiful things and often makes me worry about my future profession. I am not capable of drawing a straight line. I could draw much better as a twelve-year-old. It seems to be almost a physical Inability for me, because I immediately get a cramp in my hand and continually break the points of my pencils, so that I have to rest after five minutes. Even my handwriting is the same. It gets worse every day.' Although the letter reflects a moment of discouragement, it states the truth. It made Gropius's position all the more untenable that the German school of architecture was famous for the excellence of its draughtsmanship, bordering on painterly virtues. As we can see from his earlier writings, in which he regarded art and technology as two combinable quanta, rather than autonomous qualities with their own laws and
chemistries, for Gropius, the plan or concept, on the one hand, and its first embodiment, its drawing, on the other, meant two entirely separate spheres. For this reason the contribution made by his draughtsmen is greater than usual in his oeuvre, and is always credited by name, along with his own.7 We need not exaggerate the significance of this fact, but we cannot ignore it in the case of the initiator of an institution that employed a dual leadership structure, and thought in terms of a dual value system - at first, art and craftsmanship, and later art and technology - that for him it was a given fact, an acknowledged and natural state of affairs, to hierarchically separate artistic conceptualization and practical execution. Naturally the execution - in his case, the drawing - was secondary and subservient to the idea, the artistic concept. At first the studios were so scantily equipped (if they were equipped at all) that during the first semester there was hardly any craft workshop activity at the school. For reports on this period we rely almost entirely on Feininger's letters to his wife. 'The students I have seen up to now look very self-conscious. Almost all have been in the war. It is a new type, a new generation. They are not as timid and harmless as the old professors here imagine them to be. As I see it, I think they are after something new, a new way of expressing themselves in art.'8 Nonetheless, Gropius was the object of animosity and suspicion. In the spring of 1919 open criticism of Gropius was rife in Weimar cafes; Professor Thedy veiled his complaints in conversation with Feininger. On 23 May, Feininger wrote: 'The intrigue against Gropius is becoming very pointed and naturally also against myself... The mere fact of having changed the name of the art school to "Bauhaus" has been enough to enrage them ... These now are the "protectors of the Fatherland", the Pan-Germans! ... The guilds are also afraid of us, of impending rivalry in their field of crafts, and are moving in closed ranks against Gropius.'9

Feininger made some acute observations regarding Gropius, from the alertly watchful artist's viewpoint vis-à-vis the technocrat, the representative of the other order. Although the two men maintained an informal, friendly contact, a certain amount of distance and reservation is palpable in each line of Feininger's.

'I cannot very well judge Groplus's deeper relationship to the spiritual meaning of art in our time as we understand it. Sometimes I find myself wondering whether he would not willingly subjugate plastic art to make it serve architecture, and then would agree to the fantastic and decorative side of it only.'10 One week later he continues:

You know me to be no less fanatical than Gropius, but he values crafts and the technical aspect. I am concerned with the spiritual side of art - at least at the present - more than he is. But he will never ask me to make concessions, and I, for my part, want to help him and give him all the support in my power. He is a man loyal and frank, full of Idealism, and without any selfishness. His creativity, in the sense that we understand it, doesn't count as much as his personality as an outspoken human being ... Yet it would almost seem as if this sort of life suits him, to be in contact with people constantly, to be important in the weaving of destinies. But it keeps him from doing work of his own.11

The results of the first semester were summed up by the (private) exhibition of the students' work. Feininger writes:

It was for the first time that I saw an assemblage of student works... Some works simply dumbfounded me and made me feel quite humble at my inadequacy. I felt like a loiterer left behind on the wayside. But, there was also a confusing mass of industrious studies without any sign of talent . . . Gropius had told me privately that he intended to deal harshly and attack certain elements uncompromisingly - and he did. I have to admit that he was perfectly right. He has very precise judgment, and
what a man like myself might have cherished out of tradition, he is apt to overthrow. This seems hard, but it clears the road and is stimulating. The Thedy class fared the worst. They showed nothing but works in the driest academic character. Thedy was beside himself. Gropius had indeed used harsh words to criticize the students and their teachers: the moment had arrived when he at last could point at concrete objects to demonstrate more precisely than ever before what he had in mind to accomplish at the Bauhaus. It was obvious that he was not simply judging the individual work displayed; much more was at stake: the academy itself. Gentlemen: first of all, the outward appearances. All these fine frames, lavish elaboration, finished paintings - but for whom, actually? I had asked specifically for plans and conceptual sketches. Not one painter or sculptor showed plans for compositions, which, in an institution such as ours, are the most important. Who can afford, nowadays, to paint a fully composed, highly finished picture complete with varnish? To emphasize the kind of profound and fundamental changes he wished to see at the Bauhaus, he referred back to the experience shared by all, the war that had wrought such changes in Germany. 'We find ourselves in a colossal catastrophe of world history, in a transformation of the whole of life and the whole of inner man. Many students have just returned from the battlefield. Those who have survived a meeting with death came home basically altered... Since I most particularly empathize with all of this do not wish to employ any coercion, on my part. You will accomplish everything voluntarily. At the same time he spared no effort to make the students understand that no compromises were to be made in the area of talent and work ethic. 'These days our state has hardly any money for cultural purposes, and cannot afford to subsidize those who do a bit of work, and desire to promenade forth a bit of talent... Only those among you will remain as professional artists who are ready to starve for it.' Gropius knew full well what was at stake in his speech. What he had floated out in the Manifesto had been a programme wrapped in the mists of Romanticism and emotion. Now, in his capacity as director, he could exercise his full powers clearly, unmistakably and unequivocally to define what he wanted. He knew very well that Thedy and the other professors of academic art would now at last comprehend his full import. Gropius was not judging the quality of exhibited paintings; he made no mention of shortcomings in painterly accomplishment, choice of subject, or technique. He said not a word about the excellence of some of the work. The target of his attack was easel painting itself, as a medium, as an activity inadequate for the age. In other words: fine art itself. Naturally he was not in a position to dismiss the professors of painting, along with those students fuelled by artistic ambition; but in speaking of his plans he explicitly singled out handicrafts and the alliance for the construction of tomorrow's Great Building, so that it was now obvious that the academy as an Institution for painting simply did not exist in his programme. 'We must shed everything that is prewar, for everything was totally different back then,' he said, and it was obvious that this sentence was not aimed at the students.

He set handicraft training as an absolute necessity in front of the whole school community; he indicated that starting with the coming semester there would be for the students of painting a new decorative painting workshop - that is, a course in applied art - and that he intended to start a similar course in decorative architectural sculpture for students of sculpture. For as long as they have not acquired actual craft expertise, the
words apprentice, journeyman and junior master were no more than empty playthings, without the backing of craftsmanship behind them.

17 Gropius in fact united two threads of thought in his speech. On the one hand he informed the academic professors that their time was past - he expressed this by means of the image of the war and the deep-seated changes it had brought. On the other hand he addressed the young people whom he had indeed wanted to win over, since he intended to realize his plans through them, and, like Feininger, he too had noticed that they were bursting with creative energy and the desire to innovate. It is to them he offered his programme:

I propose that, for the time being, we refrain from public exhibitions and work from a new point of departure so that, in these turbulent times, we can collect our thoughts anew and become first of all self-sufficient ... No large spiritual organizations, but small, secret, self-contained societies, lodges. Conspiracies will form which will want to watch over and artistically shape a secret, a nucleus of a belief, until from the individual groups a universally great, enduring, spiritual-religious idea will rise again, which finally must find its crystalline expression in a great integral work of art (Gesamtkunstwerk) ... I firmly believe that we are the precursors and first instruments of such a new, universal idea.16

18 The Great Building, the integral architectural work of art towering above all else, at the same time indicates the special place held by the architect in society. 'Before the war we put the cart before the horse, we went about the wrong way to make art universal. We designed artistic ashtrays and beer mugs, and in that way hoped to work up to the great building. Now things will be reversed ... this great total work of art, this cathedral of the future, will shine with its abundance of light into the smallest objects of everyday life.'17

19 Architecture raised to the top of the pyramid of values may have had its roots in the earlier visions of Taut, but it now naturally suggested the nature of the ambitions of the years immediately following the war. The architect was seen as the lord and creator of the supreme work towering above all, glittering with a somewhat mystical aura, the highest symbol for all of society. As the designer of the collective creative endeavour, director of its realization and knower of its secrets, the architect was to be the high priest of a new religion.

20 And this was precisely where all that ambition was directed: the aspiring individual of the new age, of the disjointed time, did not desire to be a great scientist, head of state, philosopher, or even the greatest of artists, for he wanted to gain possession of the most precious treasure of the age, that of mystical knowledge, as the wizard and chief keeper of the secret of a spiritual community.

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NOTES

1. Gropius, Programme of the Staatliche Bauhaus in Weimar, April 1919; in Wingler, op. cit., p.31.
7. Nerdinger, op. cit., p. 29, writes as follows: 'If someone wishes to become a composer, and fails already at learning to play an instrument, one could assume that he would soon give up his planned profession. This was not so in Gropius's case, even though around 1900 a mastery of draftsmanship was not only centrally important to architectural training (to a different degree than today), but this mastery also distinguished the architect. All important architects of his day, from Otto Wagner and Theodor Fischer to Fritz Schumacher, not to mention the trained painter-architects like Olbrich, Behrens or Riimerschmid were splendid draftsmen. Gropius, however, considered the translation of a design concept into a drawing to be a support activity from the very beginning. He simply raised himself above this because of his family connections and the commissions which he gained through them. This "lordly posture" is characteristic of his entire life; but more significant is an awareness of his own importance, demonstrated even at a young age that gave Gropius the lifelong air of a missionary. When Behrens and Gropius had an argument because, among other things, the height of the attic in the Cuno house was not correct - probably because of an error by Gropius - Gropius could no longer maintain his position at Behrens's office. Although he was only twenty-eight years old and had no professional degree, he wrote to Osthau in his usual unfaltering self-confidence: "Lately, Behrens and I have come to some differences of opinion which have become so marked that yesterday I found it necessary to forego any further collaboration."

Gropius promptly opened his own office in Berlin and found a congenial co-worker in Adolf Meyer, who directed the "Gropius Architectural Office" until the beginning of 1925. In 1966. Gropius wrote that Meyer had never been his partner, but rather had always been a paid employee. He considered it to his credit that he, contrary to the common practice of the day, mentioned Meyer's name in publications.'

11. Ibid., letters of 30 May and 1 June 1919. pp. 103-4.
14. Ibid.
15. Ibid.
16. Ibid., p. 211.
17. Ibid.
Chapter 5. Weimar

1. THE TOWNSFOLK of Weimar were weary and frustrated in the autumn of 1919, when it became all too apparent that the new director of the renamed art school was not going to steer the Bauhaus in the spirit of Goethe and Schiller - or even according to the norms expected by Professor Max Thedy. Weimar's burghers did not count themselves among those who were impelled by the upheavals of the war towards creating a new life and a new world. On the contrary, their chief interest lay in restoring the way things used to be, restoring law and order. The Constitutional Assembly, convened in Weimar, had increased tensions to breaking-point: the town was surrounded by federal military units, Reichswehrtruppen and Prussian security police deployed to protect the National Assembly, pushing the population, already pressed by postwar shortages, to the brink of starvation. Some of the troops quartered with families were still in town as late as January 1920.

2. Gropius’s June 1919 address had made it clear that he wanted teachers whose spirit was alien to the town: artists with a European outlook and reputation, who were not on intimate terms with local Weimar traditions. But the people of Weimar were quite satisfied with their former Academy of Fine Arts, and did not have the slightest inclination to exchange it for an art that was alien, unfamiliar, non-German in spirit, and possessed an inscrutable worldview.

3. It would seem that the Bauhaus had set out to function as an open, democratic institution in a town where the demos itself - the entire population of Weimar from the highest officials down to the housewives - opposed this. In the final analysis the sole supporter of the Bauhaus was the Social Democratic Party, itself a foreign body in the town; and whenever Gropius was forced to look for help for the school, he always had to turn to intellectuals and authorities outside of Weimar.¹

4. The professors of the former art academy had drawn their own conclusions from Gropius’s June address, and proceeded to take counter-measures. Professors Fröhlich and Thedy, together with a few Weimar painters, as representatives of a ’Kunstwollen based on national foundations’ left no stone unturned until they reached a certain representative, Sturm, whom they tried to convince at the start of the new semester to block the Bauhaus's fiscal appropriations.²
The most significant anti-Bauhaus organization was the 'Free Union for the protection of the town's interests', whose members held a public meeting at the restaurant Erholung on 12 December 1919. Among those attending were members of the Town Council, students and faculty of the Bauhaus and the Academy, and residents of the town. The meeting was opened by Dr Emil Herfurth, a teacher at the Weimar Gymnasium and leader of the Free Union. He admitted being one of those who approached the new art with caution, and stated that opponents of the Bauhaus would like to see the continuation of the old Fine Arts Academy in unchanged form, as well as more respect on the part of the new faculty and students towards local customs and traditions. Gropius responded with a conciliatory speech, requesting patience and confidence in the new institution. He argued that a public meeting was not qualified to make decisions in the area of art, and should restrict its debate to the discussion of practical matters.

Following this, the meeting degenerated into personal remarks, barring fruitful discussion of the issues outlined at the beginning. The tone was set by the presiding officer, Dr Kreubel, who compared modern art to the artistic attempts of the insane, referring to Klaus Prinzhorn's *Bildnerei der Geisteskranken* ('Artistry of the Mentally III'), a book that was well-known at the time. He went on to make political insinuations about the Bauhaus, calling it a 'Spartacist-Bolshevik institution' characterized by 'alien' and 'Jewish' art. The rest of the meeting was taken up by an emotional address read by Hans Gross, a student at the school. He spoke about German art, and its true sources in 'personality, energy and will', qualities which, according to him, were dying out as a result of the 'internationalist reign', which was nothing but a 'wolf thirsting for the blood of the German people'. Later Gross maintained that he was not referring to the Bauhaus, but merely to German folk art, and he was only quoting from a lecture he had given in Hamburg a few months earlier. However, the mood of the meeting was such that his remarks were understood by everyone as a direct attack on Gropius, and were enthusiastically applauded as such. Gross went on to demand 'men of iron and steel', and a leadership that would focus on 'the essential character of being German', since 'the German people had completely lost its self-awareness, the knowledge of its own soul, and would only awaken to its realization ... when the knife was poised at its throat.'

Gropius immediately called Gross to his office and took him to task, reminding him of the dangers of mixing politics and art at the Bauhaus. 'If we admit politics to the Bauhaus... it will collapse like a house of cards. I have already announced my intention to prevent any and all politics from entering the Bauhaus, and have watched like Cerberus that this should be so.' Gross was denounced at the meeting of the Bauhaus student body, which also issued a position statement. 'We are not in search of an old or a modern art... but wish to proceed on the road to truth and purity... We declare our total agreement with the work plan of the Bauhaus, and our complete confidence in the creator of the Bauhaus concept, Mr Gropius, and his associates... We request the population of Weimar... at last to give us the peace required for our work: this is our wish.' But thirteen of Gross's fellow students submitted an open letter to the artists of Weimar, addressed personally to Mr Lambrecht, in defense of Gross: 'We the undersigned feel offended by the actions taken against Gross for being a true German. And like Gross, we find it absolutely impossible to be part of this student body for even an hour longer... We are convinced that the Weimar art world thinks and feels like us in close solidarity and we count on their assistance.' As a consequence of this letter, dated 16 December, Gross and thirteen other students, most
of them the offspring of noble families, left the Bauhaus. The conviction formulated in
their letter was justified by later events.

Although this incident, as Huter observes, liberated the Bauhaus of extreme right-wing
elements, it signalled not the end but the beginning of a long series of attacks. Inside and
outside the Bauhaus those who wanted law and order and the return of the undisturbed
rule of former values were becoming more and more intolerant. They demanded to be rid
of this group of unruly strangers in their midst, forced upon them by the Bauhaus, whose
behaviour and manner of dress were so different from those prevalent in the town of
Weimar. The Bauhaus Masters' Council held a meeting on 18 December, and arrived at a
consensus that Gross had been used by the cliques opposing the Bauhaus to make the
school's position untenable in the community. Engelman, who had spoken with Paul
Teichgräber, one of Gross's friends who signed the letter expressing solidarity with him,
was of the opinion that the issue was not politics but easel painting itself, which had been
so sharply attacked by Gropius in his speech that summer. He went on to hint that if the
condemnation of easel painting within the Bauhaus were to persist, it was likely that
other students would leave the school. Another representative of the students, Walter
determann, one of the signers of the letter expressing solidarity with Gropius, held the
opinion that Gross's speech had not been that dangerous; according to him, the
participants at the public meeting went home reassured that all parties, including the
right, were represented at the Bauhaus, and not only Bolsheviks and Spartacists, as Dr
Kreubel would have it. He also stated that the political debates were alarming many,
especially among the older students, who were becoming concerned that they would not
be able to complete their studies in peace, and were therefore contemplating leaving the
school. Having heard the student representatives, the Bauhaus Masters' Council
unanimously resolved strictly to prohibit political activity of any nature on the part of
the 'apprentices' at the Bauhaus, on pain of expulsion. Apart from this, the school would
continue to function along the lines of the Bauhaus programme, and it was again
emphasized that nature studies and easel painting would continue as essential
components of the curriculum. Professor Thedy added a handwritten note to the minutes
of the meeting: 'On the issue of easel painting it is my feeling that both my school and
easel painting itself had been chastised; to which masters Feininger and Itten objected
that they themselves were easel painters, and the general consensus was that easel
painting should continue.'

On the same day the foes of the Bauhaus held a meeting at the restaurant Schwann, one
of its results being a stepped-up press campaign directed at the school over the next two
months, primarily on the pages of the Weimar nationalist daily Thüringer Landeszeitung
Deutschland. Two journalists, Leonard Schrickel and Mathilde Freiin von Freytag-
Loringhoven, wrote articles about the presence and harmful influence of 'alien', 'non-
German' elements at the Bauhaus. Freytag-Loringhoven, a member of the Town Council,
kept the issue alive there as well. On the day of the meeting at the Schwann, Schrickel
published an article containing a characteristic distortion of the Gross affair. He wrote,
iccorrectly, that Gropius and the Bauhaus students' collective censored Gross's speech
before the public meeting, and comments: 'Is it believable that the opinion of foreigners
is decisive in the student assembly? That foreigners sit in judgment over German art
students? People whose un-German ancestry (Galicia? Slovakia?) is apparent a mile off?
Who even give themselves airs over their "international" (more correctly, a-national,
homeless) attitude? Who constitute an anti-German encampment in order to drive out Germans of belief and birth?"  

On 19 December, a group of 'citizens and artists of Weimar' submitted a petition, with fifty signatures, to the government, demanding the closing of the Bauhaus. The government, after a lengthy and exhaustive investigation, rejected the petition. Within the Bauhaus the rift at last became openly acknowledged. Thedy and Fröhlich withdrew their signatures from the Masters' Council's resolution to prohibit intramural politics, stating that they were not told that the resolution would be published. In protest, Fröhlich resigned from the Masters' Council. Thedy, whom Gropius held to be 'a man of good will, despite his narrow-mindedness', was not as much of a political fanatic as some of Gropius's other opponents; on the other hand, he was most deeply affected by Gropius's programme, directed as it was against the very substance of his life's work. Gropius and a portion of the student body had openly rejected easel painting, that is, the art of painting itself. They considered this medium, as became apparent from Gropius's June address, to be a superannuated, individualistic activity that presupposed a single artistic creator and a single owner, and thus stood in opposition to the collectively realized and owned, integral work of art: architecture, where painting is subordinate and determined by architectural form and structure. On 20 January 1920, Thedy wrote a letter to Gropius, informing him that he was withdrawing from Gropius's programme, deeply regretting that Gropius had to turn the flourishing and renowned Weimar school of art into the staging ground of his experiment. On 1 January 1920 Thedy had already signed the anti-Bauhaus protest published in Deutschland, and his signature carried considerable weight, since he was the presiding officer of the Thuringian Chamber of Artists. 

Early in 1920 the opponents of the Bauhaus formed a Citizens' Union (Bürgerverein) which published a brochure aimed at the Bauhaus. The president of the union and the editor of the brochure was Dr Emil Herfurth, and the most significant demand contained therein was the restoration of the independence of the former School of Fine Arts, and the safeguarding of its natural growth. All this was supported by the arguments of the political right: the former school had been 'thoroughly national and modest, German in the best sense of the word'. It also stated that 'the freedom of artistic creation has to be realized, and an end put to the Intolerable monopoly of certain one-sided trends' (meaning Expressionism). 

The position of the Bauhaus now became critical: its opponents, from art professors to right-wing politicians, massed into a single camp of enemies united by the press campaign. Against them the Bauhaus could only muster testimonials of sympathy: Gropius had rallied progressive German intellectual opinion, collectively and individually, involving well-known public personalities, including more than one member of the aristocracy. In the town of Weimar he was supported by Ernst Hardt and some of his theatre associates, and it cannot be doubted that the nation's leading artists, intellectual lights and institutions carried a certain weight even in Weimar circles. An open letter to the government, published in Deutschland on 24 January 1920, beginning with 'Young artists are under political attack', was bound to arouse nationwide doubts about the propriety of the Weimar events. It became a matter of prestige for the Social Democratic government of Thuringia to protect a Bauhaus exposed to the attacks of middle-class nationalist forces. With his outstanding strategic intuition, Gropius emphasized in his letter to Dr Edwin Redslob, National Art Commissioner, that 'this was not merely a local, internal affair, but something far more significant: a war being fought by the old-
fashioned, disappearing system of training - Weimar being one of its strongholds - against the emerging new, let us say neo-Gothic, worldview, whose adherents we are.16 Gropius brought up the idea of withdrawing the Bauhaus from the control of the town of Weimar, and turning it into an institute run by the central national government. However, Dr Redslob saw no possibility of accomplishing this.17 The people of Weimar insisted on demanding that the new institute be split into two parts, meaning the complete restitution of the former School of Fine Arts, next to which there would be a School of Applied Arts which could remain under Gropius's direction. As a compromise, Gropius proposed the establishment of an 'Old Weimar Academy of Painting' to function within the Bauhaus.18 At the 3 February meeting of the Masters' Council the conflict was pronounced deep and unbridgeable, making a split unavoidable. By mutual agreement Thedy's School of Painting was given its independence; however, legally - and the name proposed by Thedy and his colleagues in 1919, uniting the names of the two former institutions under the title of Bauhaus had a role in this - the Bauhaus remained as the successor of both the former School of Fine Arts and the School of Applied Arts. The People's Council (Volksrat), temporarily governing the province of Thuringia after 1 May, in the wake of the upheavals occasioned by the Kapp putsch, announced in June the founding of the Academy of Painting under the direction of Professors Thedy and Rasch, and this also constituted a recognition of the Bauhaus. What was more, Gropius was right in reading the establishment of the conservative school of painting as tacit public acknowledgment of the radical nature of the Bauhaus itself.

With this, the first battle of the town of Weimar against the Bauhaus could be considered closed; or, more accurately put, the scene of the battle was transferred to the Thuringian parliament. Gropius had to apply to the parliament for funds and for authorization of his programme. Of the eight parliamentary parties19 the two leading conservative parties, the Deutsche Volkspartei (German People's Party) and the Deutschnationalen Volkspartei (German National People's Party), opposed the authorization of the Bauhaus, albeit on purely financial grounds; the majority, however, accepted Gropius's thesis that politicians should not meddle in matters of art. The pro-Bauhaus SPD (Social Democratic Party) also emphasized that its support of the Bauhaus was not motivated by political considerations. Only the representative of the USPD (Independent Social Democratic Party) condemned the enemies of the Bauhaus for their 'philistine resentment of the modern world-view'.20

The final outcome of the parliamentary debate was that the Bauhaus gained time: the decision about its fate had to be postponed until the time when the school could produce concrete results to prove that it merited continued state support. It is typical of the fate of the Bauhaus that Gropius defended the school in front of the parliament by claiming that the training it provided was much more conventional than avant-garde in nature, and was in harmony with the education offered at other similar institutions nationwide.21

In spite of his rejection and prohibition of politics within the Bauhaus, Gropius designed a memorial for the nine Weimar workers who were victims of the 1920 Kapp putsch. In March 1920, at the funeral of the workers, there was a public demonstration in Weimar, at which placards bearing the names of Rosa Luxemburg and Karl Liebknecht were carried by the crowd. In spite of the prohibitions, many Bauhaus members took part in the march. Gropius, who had been dissuaded from participating by Alma Mahler - she happened to be visiting In town at the time -eventually created the monument to express his stand regarding the murder of the workmen, who had been killed when the Reichswehr units fired into the demonstrating crowd. Alfred Forbát recollects having
made the three-dimensional maquette on the basis of Gropius's loose sketch, and this was later poured in concrete. The Nazis destroyed the monument in 1933, but it was re-erected in not quite its original form in 1946.

16 Upon the secession of the School of Painting from the Bauhaus, and subsequent parliamentary approval of their mutual autonomy, Gropius gained two new faculty positions, when Engelmann and Klemm joined the new school of painting in 1921. In their places Gropius, who had sharply attacked easel painting as artistic activity unsuitable for the age, invited two painters as form masters at the Bauhaus: Oskar Schlemmer and Paul Klee.

NOTES

5. 'Erklärung der gesamten Schülerschaft des Staatlichen Bauhauses Weimar zum Fall Gross'. September 1919; in Hüter, op. cit., p. 214.
8. Miller-Lane, op. cit., p. 73.
13. The brochure appeared in Weimar. 1920. with the title Der Streit um das Staatliche Bauhaus.
15. 'Offener Brief an die Staatsregierung Sachsen-Weimar-Eisenach', Deutschland. 24 January 1920; in Pressesstimme, p. 4.
16. Letter from Walter Gropius to Dr Edwin Redlsob, 13 January 1920; in Hüter, op. cit., p. 218.
17. Letter from Walter Gropius to Dr Adolph Behne, Chartteburg. 31 January 1920; in Hüter, op. cit., p. 221; and letter from Walter Gropius to Hans Poelzig, Dresden, 31 January 1920; in Hüter, op. cit., p. 221.
19. Miller-Lane, op. cit., p. 75. lists 7 parliamentary parties at this time in the Thuringian Parliament: Unabhängige Sozialistische Partei Deutschlands (USPD) - Independent Socialist Party; Deutsche Volkspartei (DVP) - German People's Party; Deutschnationale Volkspartei
(DNVP) - German National People's Party; in addition, the Nazi Party (NSDAP), the National Socialist Freedom Party (NSFP) and the Communist Party (KPD). The records show that there was also a German Democratic Party (DDP).

20. Miller-Lane. op. cit., p. 75.


22. Nerdinger, op. cit., p. 46. Quotes Alfred Forbát, 'Erinnerungen eines Architekten aus vier Ländern', p. 47: 'I translated a rough sketch by Gropius into a three-dimensional model, which was subsequently cast in concrete.'
Chapter 6. Breathing Exercises

FROM the outset the internal structure of the Bauhaus was hierarchic, the tip of the pyramid occupied by the person of the director, Gropius. He had the right to decide about any and all organizational, personal or educational matters, unless it was an issue to be deferred to parliament or outside authorities. His immediate right-hand associate was the legal counsellor, who also handled financial and administrative matters. The director presided over the Masters' Council consisting of the artist-instructors. According to Friedhelm Kröll, their order of precedence was determined by their artistic rank and reputation prior to their involvement with the Bauhaus. Kröll's opinion is confirmed both by subsequent events and also by Gropius's letter to Ernst Hardt, quoted earlier, in which he emphasized the necessity of attracting to Weimar well-known and important artists, 'even if, deep down, we cannot fully comprehend their innermost meaning at this time.'

This strategy, aiming at the enrichment of the school's intellectual climate and prestige, forced Gropius into a series of moves diametrically opposed to the letter and spirit of the Manifesto. For if it was true that among the hallmarks of the Bauhaus the names of Kandinsky and Klee carried the greatest weight and brilliance, had Gropius adhered to his own programme announced in the June 1919 address which stressed the importance of craftsmanship, neither of the two would have been invited to the Bauhaus. The crafts masters were not included in the Masters' Council; they had no votes, and were consulted only as occasional advisers, much like the student representatives. Even though crafts training occupied the central position in the original Bauhaus concept and in the school's curriculum, implying that art was relegated to a highly respected sphere that was outside and above the school's concerns, all the same, Groplus was adamant in his response to the crafts masters' demand for an equal voting presence on the council: 'It is essential for the work of the Bauhaus that the artists have a greater voice in issues involving the crafts, which can be learned, rather than the other way around, for art is not a matter of profession but of vocation ... The composition of the Masters' Council corresponds to the historical evolution of the Bauhaus, which owes its concept and Inception not to craftsmen but to artists. . . And this is a spiritual, not a technical, concept. . . Only those have the right to determine the aims and direction of our work who had a share in defining and formulating this concept.'

Naturally, the medieval guild-ideal, the neo-Gothic dream of a community of equals, artists and artisans working harmoniously side by side, steeped in the same faith, was not
going to be realized. But not for a lack of electrical charge in the air, which was there in
abundance to provide a spark for the creation of such a community of artists. However,
there was no true democratic model in existence to prevent this, at first barely
perceptible, tendency at the Bauhaus from growing into a tragic flaw: the school was
compelled to try to establish a power-base of some sort, in order to survive among so
many foes who certainly did not believe in mutual tolerance.

From the first moment the Bauhaus was forced into an ever exacerbating schizophrenia:
while Gropius was actually thinking of 'mass-produced buildings' and high technology, in
public he had to speak about crafts; when he committed himself to the ideals of
craftsmanship, he found himself opposed by the conservative painters of the academy,
and when he wanted to realize his modern design ideas by smuggling them into the crafts
programme, the watchful eyes of the Thuringian parliament demanded to see evidence of
his loyalty, and only after the exhibition of objects designed to please the tastes of
Weimar would it promise the continued support upon which the school's survival
depended. Given this scenario, if Gropius had followed the 1919 Manifesto to the letter,
and placed the fate of the Bauhaus in the hands of technically outstanding master
craftsmen who were nonetheless insignificant from a national and international point of
view, the school would not have survived its first year. At best it would have turned into
an abject, postwar version of the former institution directed by van de Velde, surviving
reduced into a mere department at Max Thedy's popularly approved and thriving
academy of painting. Whereas Gropius, as he said in his letter to Hardt, Intended to bring
about 'a great Whole', an autonomous and self-governing realm that would become a
factor to be reckoned with in German culture and on the international scene. For this,
politics was indispensable, as was the broadest kind of publicity. He needed names that
would ring a bell; he had to win over artists of the highest renown and reputation, whose
presence would secure international support - as well as members of the younger
generation who had made a name for themselves in the sphere of the avant-garde. Since
he was constantly forced to be on the defensive, he had to strive for a position of power;
the show of strength became a prerequisite of survival, even if such strength came from
the outside, in the face of the local powers and the suffocating public opinion of Weimar.
This struggle for power and a position of strength was reflected multifold within the
school, and set the scene for the paradigmatic conflict at the Bauhaus between Gropius
and Johannes Itten, during the years 1919 to 1922.

Itten was the only one among the Bauhaus masters with pedagogical training - he had
several years of experience as a teacher and art instructor. He was born in 1888 at
Süderen-Linden, near Bern, Switzerland, the child of a teacher and a peasant girl.
Originally intending to be a teacher, in the course of his studies at Bern he became
familiar with the pedagogic reform tradition, the teachings of Rousseau, Pestalozzi,
Fröbel and Montessori, their empathic and patient methods of education and training. In
his memoirs he wrote: 'When I first taught in 1908 at the elementary school of a Swiss
village, I tried to avoid anything which would disturb the children's naivety. Almost
instinctively I realized that all criticism and corrections offend and destroy self-
confidence, while encouragement and recognition further the growth of abilities.' For
example, he corrected spelling mistakes by reading the children's essays, noting the
mistakes, and then writing the misspelled words on the blackboard, without mentioning
the names of the children who made the mistakes. Like Goethe, Itten was also convinced
that one of the main goals of education is the preservation and fostering of childhood
genius, of the wholeness and integrity of the child’s world view. He saw a dangerous force in the rules and regulations of the school system, so alien to the child, and in the face of which one had to strive to keep the individual values of the child. In Vienna he was not the only one with such pedagogical views. At Franz Cizek’s private academy there was no academic drawing instruction whatever. There, too, first and foremost the students’ inner impulses were allowed to come to the forefront, and they were encouraged to use the most varied materials, which were glued, nailed, or the like, to compose pictures. According to some, Itten was a follower of Cizek, while in the opinion of others Cizek borrowed from Itten.  

As Rainer Wick notes, Itten ultimately did not believe in a programme narrowed down to the concept of individuality, for ‘by preserving the genius of childhood ... he had intended to give a new channel of expression to our entire civilization’. In his pedagogy Itten above all strove to avoid a ‘sterile intellectualism’, and endeavoured to achieve a balance according to which ‘on the one hand each child has to be taught so that he may develop along the lines of his original, individual character, thereby preserving his creativity, while on the other he has to be acquainted with those principles of artistic creation that must be mastered if he is to be capable of giving form to his original and innovative ideas.’ Itten constantly held this twofold guideline in view, while keeping the personality itself as the focal point of his pedagogical work, holding the preservation and unfolding of the marks of Individual character to be of paramount importance. The painter Gyula Pap, who, as a member of the Bauhaus from 1920 to 1923, was also one of Itten’s students, recollects that at the first class meeting Itten asked the students to prepare two compositions using their favourite colours. One was to consist of spots - colour areas arranged into shapes obeying the most involuntary impulses - and the other to consist of geometric forms. When they were finished, the students were asked to stand in a circle.
holding their two colour compositions in front of them. Itten said, 'Now take a good look at each other, for never again will you stand so nakedly and openly exposed in front of each other.' As Gyula Pap remembers it, the colours chosen showed an astonishing consonance with the natural hues and intensities of each student's complexion, hair, eyes, so that the compositions, to everyone's amazement, indeed seemed to convey individual personalities.

6 Itten did not stay in his post as elementary school teacher. In 1909 he entered the Geneva Academy of Art, but became disillusioned with the academic teaching methods and returned to Bern, where he studied mathematics, physics and chemistry to complete his training as a high school teacher. After taking his examinations, he decided to return to painting. Again matriculating at Geneva, he spent some time studying geometric form elements and their contrasts under the guidance of Professor Eugene Gilliard. He credited these studies with enabling him to obtain a grasp of 'the basic formal elements of all artistic work'. However, the decisive influence on his career came in Stuttgart, where, starting in 1913, he studied with Ida Kerkovius, the student of Adolf Hözel, one of the foremost art educators of the period. (Kerkovius later became a pupil of Itten's at the Bauhaus.) At Stuttgart Itten was unable to gain admission to the Academy, and Hözel, as a professor there, was not allowed to take on private students. During the three years spent in Stuttgart, Itten absorbed Hözel's principal teachings: a colour theory based on Goethe's, including the colour circle; the theory of light/dark contrasts that preoccupied Hözel around this time; the method of analysing the works of the classical masters of painting, in the course of which the student investigates the structure and composition of these works; the mode of collaging torn papers, which, during this experimental period of Hözel's, formed such an important part of his approach; the gymnastic exercises that Hözel regularly performed and asked his students to perform; and the practice of automatic drawings made in the psychically receptive state following these exercises. Itten used every one of these elements in his own pedagogical work. In 1916 at the invitation of one of his students he moved to Vienna, where he opened an art school which soon became well known in the city. He recalled this period in his memoirs: 'We worked on geometric and rhythmic forms, problems of proportion and expressive pictorial composition ... In addition to the study of polar contrasts, exercises promoting relaxation and concentration brought amazing successes. I recognized creative automatism as one of the most important factors in art. I myself worked on geometric-abstract pictures which were based on careful pictorial constructions.'

7 As mentioned, Itten was introduced to Gropius early in 1919 in Vienna by Alma Mahler, Gropius's first wife. He immediately accepted Gropius's invitation to Weimar. He later wrote: 'I was particularly attracted by the studios and workshops and the fact that the Bauhaus was still empty so that the new could be built without much tearing down of the old.'

8 Itten was followed to Weimar by more than twenty of his pupils from Vienna: they formed the nucleus of his rapidly growing camp.

9 Itten wanted to be a high priest himself, and in a much stricter sense of the word than Gropius. He had come to adopt Mazdaznan, one of the quasi-religious movements of the period. Based on the original teachings of Zoroaster in Persia, it was popularized after the First World War by Otto Hanisch, a Leipzig typographer, who changed his name to Dr Othman Zar-Adhust Ha'nisch; his doctrines might be described as a kind of dualism. The creator of light, Ahura Mazda, is in eternal struggle for world supremacy against Angra
Mainyu, the creator of darkness. The duty of humans is to contribute to the victory of light. Mankind becomes fit for the task by freeing itself of everything that aids the enemy; expelling all gross matter from the body by means of fasting, vegetarianism, an ordered lifestyle, and by purging and breathing exercises. In addition, meditation is needed to restore inner calm, as well as a refusal to join the scurrying rat-race of everyday life.\footnote{These were the teachings that Itten passed on, with all the persuasive power of his hypnotic and charismatic personality, to the youth of the Bauhaus thirsting for a philosophy of life. He had an extraordinary influence. He went about wearing a monk's robe (he himself designed the flowing, Oriental-style crimson outfit), his head shaven, sporting thin wire-rimmed glasses. His students worshipped him; for them, he was indeed the revered high priest. Helmuth von Erffa writes: 'We all hoped for a better life, and those hopes centred, not around Gropius at first, but around Johannes Itten. Gropius might share our simple meals in the Bauhaus canteen, but it was Itten who was a leading spirit in those early days.' According to Paul Citroen:}

There was something demonic about Itten. As a master he was either ardently admired or just as ardently hated by his opponents, of whom there were many. At all events, it was impossible to ignore him. For those of us who belonged to the Mazdaznan group - a unique community within the student body - Itten exuded a special radiance. One could almost call it holiness. We were inclined to approach him only in whispers; our reverence was overwhelming, and we were completely enchanted and happy when he associated with us pleasantly and without restraint. When he returned from Herrliberg [see note 15], we Mazdaznan boys reached the zenith of fulfilment. There were all sorts of gatherings - lectures, exercises, religious services, councils, meals - all unbelievably enthusiastic work over the common goal of perfection, of the sovereign idea. A jealous community was simply unthinkable. And Itten, entrusted with the mysteries of reincarnation and other secrets of the doctrine, by virtue of his weeks in Herrliberg, was our undisputed master and leader.\footnote{In addition to Itten's personal emanation, his special position in the curriculum of the Bauhaus induced many of the students to consider him to be more than just the most effective and significant master of the school. At the outset of the new semester following the restoration of the former Academy of Fine Art, on 20 September 1920, the Masters' Council held a meeting at which Gropius declared that the atmosphere of crisis had to yield at last to a workmanlike mood, and he emphatically called the faculty's attention to the importance of the dual leadership of the workshops. He stated that the Bauhaus intends to motivate students equally from both sides, that of art and that of craft. Since today we do not yet possess individuals who move with equal familiarity and at sufficiently high levels in both areas, each student has to learn from two masters, one of artistic form, the other of technical expertise. The most important thing, however, is the combining of these two kinds of instruction, something that so far has only occurred in exceptional cases. In this area we need to make fundamental changes. It seems that we have arrived at the right psychological moment when ... it is imperative that we make the Basic Course required for every single student entering a workshop.}

The minutes of the session also note that 'Mr Itten is prepared to undertake the Basic Course, providing that the closest contact be maintained with the workshops.'\footnote{The Basic, or Preliminary, Course itself came into existence when the Bauhaus masters were casting about for a method of determining who was to be admitted to the school. Students arrived at Weimar from the most diverse types of schools in Germany and other countries, prepared by teaching methods of all kinds. Seeing this was the case, Itten}
proposed to Gropius that a Preliminary Course be instituted as a period of probation during which it would be possible to form an idea of the student’s abilities and character. Although Gropius felt that because of administrative complications (tuition, meal plan, etc.) provisional admission was not realizable, the Preliminary Course was already offered during the first semester to matriculated students. At the time it was not a compulsory requirement. ‘Walter Gropius generously gave me complete freedom with the structure and theme of the course,’ writes Itten.  

14 This course, which, beginning in the autumn of 1920, was a requirement for every student at the Bauhaus, had a threefold task. First, the freeing of the creative artistic powers of the students and the loosening of embedded stereotypes and conventions; second, facilitation of the choice of career, by discovering affinities for certain materials and thereby pointing the students towards that workshop in which they could continue their training most successfully; and, third, instruction in the fundamental principles of design, the basic laws of handicrafts.  

15 Itten’s classes, in accordance with the teachings of Mazdaznan and the method of Adolf Hölzelt, began with physical exercises. These breathing and gymnastic exercises served to increase awareness of elements analogous to artistic expression, such as rhythm, momentum and intensity, and brought the students into a state conducive to concentration and creative work. This was followed by a loose sequence of improvisational and constructive exercises. Itten introduced each quality and compositional element through its own contrasts to his students, whose assignments included the most thorough experiencing and pictorial representation of contrasts, such as large/small, long/short, broad/narrow, thick/thin, much/little, straight/curved, pointed/blunt, plane/volume, rough/smooth, hard/soft, still/moving, light/heavy, diagonal/circular and fluid/solid. In addition there were assignments relating to colour contrasts and various textural studies. Regarding these latter, Itten writes:  

I had long chromatic rows of real materials made for the tactile judging of different textures. The students had to feel these textures with their fingertips, their eyes closed. After a short time the sense of touch improved to an amazing degree. I then had the students make texture montages of contrasting materials. The effect of these fantastic creations was entirely novel at that time. In solving these problems the students developed a real designing fever. They began to rummage through the drawers of thrifty grandmothers, their kitchens and cellars; they ransacked the workshops of craftsmen and the rubbish heaps of factories and building sites. A whole new world was discovered: lumber and wood shavings, steel wool, wires, strings, polished wood, and sheep’s wool, feathers, glass and tin foil, grids and weaves of all kinds, leather, furs and shiny cans. Manual abilities were discovered and new textures invented. They started a mad tinkering, and their awakened instincts discovered the inexhaustible wealth of textures and their combinations. The students observed that wood could be fibrous, dry, rough, smooth or furrowed; that iron could be hard, heavy, shiny or dull. Finally they investigated how these textural qualities could be represented. These studies were of great value to the future architects, craftsmen, photographers, graphic artists and industrial designers.  

16 Itten placed heavy emphasis on developing the ability of drawing accurately from nature. ‘In order to educate the ability to observe with the utmost sharpness and accuracy, the students were assigned to do photographically realistic drawings in colour from nature. I intended to develop the eye, the hand and the memory, that is, I wanted them to know by heart what they saw.’ Just as important as total fidelity to reality was fidelity to the state of mind, to the feelings to be expressed. ‘If a genuine feeling is to be expressed in a line or
a plane, this feeling must first resound within the artist. Arm, hand, finger, the whole body, should be permeated by this feeling. One of the cardinal principles of the Chinese ink painter is "Heart and hand must be one." Music would be playing during Itten's figure-drawing classes, to accompany the movements of the model. The aim this time was not exact representation, but the expression of the body's movements and rhythms. The movements of the hand always had to follow the model's movements.

One of the basic foundation pillars of Itten's pedagogy was the course in 'analysis of the work of old masters'. These analyses were not art-historical but were intended to develop sensitivity of seeing contrasts, through intense experiencing and empathy. It was not enough that the students captured on paper their impressions of paintings by means of stating light/dark contrasts, and relationships of weight or rhythm. Itten demanded the total emotional absorption of the work. Schlemmer noted in a letter:

> At Weimar. Itten teaches analysis. He shows slides to the students, who then have to draw certain essential elements, say, movement, the main line, a curve... He shows a Gothic figure, and then the weeping Magdalene from the Grünewald Altar. The students are working hard to extract the essence of this very complicated composition. Itten watches their fumblings, and roars: If you had any kind of artistic sensibility, you would not sit there drawing in the face of this sublime representation of tears - the sorrow of the world - you would be dissolved in tears yourselves! With these words, he rushes out, slamming the door behind him. 27

To ensure a truly close contact between the Preliminary Course and the workshops, as of the autumn of 1920 Itten in effect took charge of the artistic direction of every workshop, with the exception of the Dornburg ceramics studio and the weaving and printing shops. Prior to this time none of the workshops had been under the direction of a specific form master and the students could freely choose among them. The new system, as Marcel Francisccono observes, 'combined with Itten's control of the Vorkurs, effectively gave Itten by far the greatest responsibility for the artistic direction of the Bauhaus. 28

Itten was prepared for this eventuality: in fact, this is what he had been intending all along. Numerous comments in his private correspondence as well as several aspects of his activities at the Bauhaus indicate that he considered Gropius to be a kind of bureaucrat whom sooner or later he would overshadow, so that the Bauhaus would be imbued by his own intellectual, spiritual and artistic teachings. Already in the autumn of 1919 he wrote to a friend from Weimar:

> For the time being I do nothing, while my students stir up the entire Bauhaus to set things in motion for a totally new beginning. I can already claim the best minds at the school. About one hundred students attend my art-historical analysis class, and this is only a portion of all the students signed up with me. I am going to wipe the slate clean. For the past week I have been ruling the whole Bauhaus - I proposed that we should prepare all sorts of games for the coming weeks. Thus in one stroke I have knocked out the traditional life-drawing academic approach by leading back all creative activity to its roots in play. Those who fail at this in my book fail as artists or students. You may imagine how the young people are stirred up by these ideas planted in receptive minds. In a word, I have turned the whole institute into a flexible, malleable entity, and my task is now to create direction and order out of all this mobile malleability. This gives me joy. 29

Of course these lines make one wonder whether it was the academic system or the one imposed by Gropius that Itten intended to disrupt so as to install his own order. Possibly both. The above evidence unequivocally indicates that Itten strove from the very beginning to have his influence be the definitive one within the school. He worked to
have his own markedly distinct artistic and theoretical apparatus hold sway. Since he was a radical innovator, naturally he did not waste much energy on fighting the already vanquished academic tradition, but concentrated instead on his rival Gropius's pedagogical activities. Whose new spirit would fill the Bauhaus: this was at stake.

21 In the first year of the Bauhaus the two men represented approximately equally powerful factions. Itten was backed by the spirit of the age, which was also well sensed (and exploited) by Gropius, but only as one aspect of a long-range strategy, while Itten lived and expressed the present with the fullest intensity. Itten could project this prophetic excitement and ardour more convincingly not only because of his personal charisma and powers of persuasion, but also because of his unreserved identification with the spirit of the age, while Gropius, to a certain extent, always stayed outside it: he experienced it, but, being temperamentally different from the mystics, he first of all comprehended these experiences. In spite of all his torments, he did not convert from Saul to Paul; he remained a rationalist throughout, in whose life the postwar expressionist-emotional phase remained a brief episode. In addition, in contrast to Itten, he had to constantly keep in mind the position of the Bauhaus as seen from the outside, from the Weimar, Thuringian, national and international perspectives. The years 1919-22 constituted Itten's era, especially 1920-21, when a veritable wave of mysticism swept across Germany. 'Everybody was reading the German mystics, Suso, Tauler, Meister Eckhardt, Jakob Böhme, or Buddha's sermons, or Lao-Tse. In 1930 a member of the youth movement preached on the steps of churches as a new John the Baptist, and later a former medal manufacturer, Werner Heuser, with a long beard and in a long, dark robe, made fiery speeches on the imitation of Christ to packed houses in Weimar. Itten gave him money and lodgings and announced in class after one of Heuser's speeches: "We all heard a prophet."' 30

22 Gropius was able to maintain his position of equal strength vis-à-vis Itten because he was the director, and this, in addition to his personal make-up, gave him a greater perspective to see, as if from above, the situation Itten was in the midst of. Itten's horizon was defined by the glittering goal of gaining (informal) supremacy, or decisive influence at least, over the Bauhaus; his aim was to become the spiritual leader and ultimate authority not only of his religious cult and its doctrines but of the entire school. Gropius's horizons were much broader, and he could very well see that the trend represented by Itten was nothing more than one colour in a palette of many hues. In a paradoxical manner, however, Itten's pedagogical activities, notwithstanding his short-range ambitions in 'Bauhaus politics', were and remained valuable and untainted by any political considerations, while Gropius's activities were in the long run always curtailed by the political struggles forced on him as director of the Bauhaus.

23 Their first, actually disguised and indirect, clash came at the 13 October 1920 meeting of the Masters' Council, at which Muche - who was such a close friend and associate of Itten's that we may consider him to be Itten's mouthpiece - 'spoke about the collective. Not about what is usually called a collective, but about a real community. A collective can only come about where there is an actual common goal that cannot be achieved individually, only collectively. In our school, on the other hand, there is a need for subordination, therefore we do not require individual efforts, but endeavour to suppress differences of opinion and mutual criticism. There are two groups at the Bauhaus: teachers and students. We must clarify the position of the students. It is high time that we begin intensive work and secure the optimum conditions for the individual growth of each person."
In reply, Gropius said that 'community' had been the motto of the Bauhaus from the start, but there was a danger that it would be interpreted as 'clique'. 'The community creates itself, it is born of need, and cannot be created by speeches,' he said. Then, in answer to Muche's unstated qualms, he went on: 'Everyone must exercise greater self-discipline. As for art, the less said about it, the better. Art must come about of itself. The results of the past year demonstrate that the students oppose anything they see as constraint and regulation. This kind of neurasthenia is understandable, but we must pass beyond it. Towards this end, we must see to it that students unconditionally submit to the master they have chosen, instead of sporadically attending lectures and criticizing everything.'

With this gentle reproach Gropius fended off a sign of potential dissent. However, Muche, in the agreeable role of the teacher defending the students' interests (and student representatives did attend the meeting), by pointing out the gap between the ideal of the collective and its realization at the Bauhaus, had managed to find Gropius's Achilles' heel.

Itten's large camp of worshipful followers was not limited to the student body. Among faculty members, Muche was his mainstay, and he even allowed Muche to substitute for him in his absence. To the rest of the Bauhaus, Muche appeared as Itten's fully empowered representative. He himself at first regarded the Bauhaus programme with scepticism. He became the form master of the weaving workshop, but, by his own admission, 'the ideas of Ruskin, Mom's and the German Werkbund left us cold. Nothing was more remote from our minds than the medievalism of the Bauhütte [medieval craft guild].' Muche, with his quieter, more conciliatory temperament, acted in many instances as the go-between for Itten in his dealings with others. Although he was in charge of the weaving workshop, he cherished specifically painterly ambitions, and even though he was Itten's closest and most committed disciple and friend, after Itten's departure in 1923 he became Gropius's unreserved ally in ideology and praxis.

Itten found another staunch supporter in the person of Gertrud Grunow, an eccentric autodidact in her fifties, who sought out Itten in November 1919 proposing to give lectures at the Bauhaus about harmony. Itten wrote in a letter: 'At first I was somewhat sceptical, but after some wrangling I decided to persuade my students to sign up for her lectures. I myself sat in on her class and thought she was quite good on certain matters ... Her judgment is sound, but I think she is mistaken in many respects. I am going to keep a sharp eye on her.' It is not clear how Itten had the 'authority' to admit Gertrud Grunow to the Bauhaus. The students did not take to her with the same degree of enthusiasm as he did. As Helmuth von Erffa writes: 'The most severe attacks against our personalities came in the form of Miss Gertrud Grunow's dance exercises. She was convinced that she could place us, the students, by means of music and a self-induced trance state, into an inner equilibrium that would strengthen and harmonize our creative powers.' 'She made the extravagant claim of being able to develop any faculty whatsoever. "I could teach you boxing, too," she told a classmate of mine who was endowed with a delicate physique. According to her, man's mind consisted of different layers: matter, reason, intuition, will, etc. It was her task to organize these layers, so we would become good artists.'

Gertrud Grunow's activity seemed to stem from a personality that was extremely sensitive and susceptible to occultism. On the basis of contemporary descriptions she appears to have been a caricature of Itten. In a more extreme and less effective manner, with less than Itten's considerable reservoir of personality, she represented the doctrines of the supremacy of intuition, empathy and inner concentration. She was Itten's helper.
and the supporter of his teachings and his position, without the ability or the intention to surpass him.

29 There was one other artist at the Bauhaus between 1920 and 1923 who may be counted as one of Itten’s circle: Lothar Schreyer, ‘a mystic, born in Saxony like the early seventeenth-century mystic and philosophical theologian Jakob Böhme.’ Schreyer was a painter and poet, and was working on the creation of a new type of theatre. In 1918 he founded the Sturm-Bühne in Berlin, an experimental expressionist theatre, but in 1919 moved from the hectic metropolis to Hamburg, where the theatre continued under the name of Kampfbühne. Schreyer’s expressionist productions should be approached not from the direction of the theatre, but from the viewpoints of visual art and expressionist poetry. Although the productions followed carefully prepared scenarios, they must have been actually closer to the medium labelled performance art in our days. He was primarily dependent on Kandinsky’s theories of a theater based on inner resonances and musical and colouristic movements. Larger-than-life figures, symbolizing ideas, moved on his stage into grandiose dramatic tableaux. He focused all of his means to achieve a meeting of actors and audience within a shared, elevated mystical-cultic experience. He banished dialogue from his theatre: rhythms and timbre, volume and pitch differentiated the sequences of shouts, wails, chants and incantations that made up the brunt of sound effects on stage. The score- or scenario-like Spielgang on which the production was based recalls a way of thought not unlike Itten’s.

The reader of this scenario must know: The creation of this plan and the symbols in which it is written are as significant for the stage as was the creation of musical notation for music. Anyone can read this plan who is capable of hearing the sound of the words within himself and of seeing coloured form in movement. The actor who uses this scenario must know: This plan can be acted only by one who is not a professional actor, who does not make a living out of the theatre, who is not a critic, and who does not want to be any of these himself. Anyone can act this plan who can see himself, hear himself, stand outside himself, who follows the plan without reservations, and who lives in community with the other players. Those who hear and see the scenario must know: The play can be seen and heard only in a circle of friends as a common experience, as a common act of devotion, as a common creation.

30 Gropius invited Schreyer to the Bauhaus in 1920, on the basis of the productions seen at the Hamburg Kampfbühne. He considered it important, from the viewpoint of moulding the Bauhaus into a community, that outside of the narrower course of studies there should be communal events, activities and experiences offered at the school. The establishment of a theatre workshop aimed at this goal.

31 Lothar Schreyer produced four shorter pieces at the Bauhaus: 'Maria's Song' (Marienlied), 'Wind Spirit Dance' (Tanz der Windgeister), 'Mercenary’s Dance' (Landsknechtanz), and 'Moonplay' (Mondspiel), all of which relied on the combined effects of the ritual use of word and gesture, dancers concealed behind large idol-like masks, and the reduction of lyrics to sound effects. He preferred to employ the simplest, most basic forms, colours and sounds. One of the members of the theatre workshop, Hans Haffenrichter, recalls that the most important part of preparation was that the players should experience the inner resonance. The words of the poem were strictly rehearsed in the rhythm and bar of the "Spielgang" and in the pitch and intensity of the Klangsprechen until the "spiritual dimension" became actuality.
'Moonplay', Schreyer's last, and failed, Bauhaus production (1923), was a brief masque with an incoherent text of 346 lines, performed by two players whose bodies were completely hidden behind masks ('dance shields'). The female player, Maria in the Moon, was the embodiment of the cosmic principle of salvation, order, goodness; the male player, the Moon Dancer, expressed his devotion to her. He, too, was a cosmic apparition. Maria was a larger-than-life - part plaster and part papier mâché - painted figure, open in the back, concealed behind which the performer declaimed her text. At various moments of the performance the Dancer, his entire body covered by a stiff mask, bowed down at Maria's feet. (Haffenrichter was coached in the movements by Gertrud Grunow.) A 'moon eye' was painted in the centre of the mask. The dancer had to turn around his own axis and move up and down along a vertical axis. In his memoirs Haffenrichter describes that while working on the two-metre-high Maria mask, the workshop students felt more and more imbued by the essence of artistic creation, and became convinced that they had to reach as far back as the primal origins of the theatre, back to the birth of tragedy. Thus they arrived at Nietzsche's work, just like the founders of Die Brücke and so many German Expressionists. Like them. Schreyer intended to create a theatrical imprint of the sense of national tragedy, a drama moved by the irrational forces of German history and fate. Schreyer did not turn to pseudo-religions such as Mazdaznan, but sought the sources of renewal in a Christian experience raised to the pitch of exaltation. His lectures were meant to affect students by their suggestive powers of inspiration and emotion-transfer, and in this respect they were quite close to Itten's pedagogical methods.

Muche, Gertrud Grunow, and even Schreyer served only as accompaniment to the most significant phenomenon of the Bauhaus in 1920: the life of the Mazdaznan community. By means of this small community Itten realized precisely that idea of 'small, secret self-contained associations, lodges' mentioned by Gropius in his speech during the summer of 1919. However, Gropius would have had the entire Bauhaus form itself into such an intimate community, instead of having it split into factions. Naturally he had meant a community working under the shared Bauhaus idea, under the leadership of the director.

It was around this time, in the years 1920-21, that the first building embodying a more or less collective Bauhaus effort was built: the house of the lumber dealer Adolf Sommerfeld in Berlin-Dahlem. The commission was received through Gropius's private architectural office, and the house was constructed on a fieldstone foundation out of the only available building material: teak-wood salvaged from a scuttled warship purchased by Sommerfeld. Although it was a far cry from the representative and symbolic nature of the shining cathedral depicted on the Manifesto's cover, this house was nonetheless a kind of unified work of art and as such served to illustrate the Bauhaus programme. Gropius and Meyer, on this occasion, allowed themselves to be influenced by Frank Lloyd Wright. The horizontal articulation enhancing the visual impression created by horizontal beams, and the projecting support beams, result in 'a dramatized version and rustic translation of Frank Lloyd Wright's earliest prairie houses'.

Bauhaus members contributed the interior details of the house: Josef Albers designed the stained glass windows, Joost Schmidt the wood relief panels, and some of the furniture was designed and executed by Marcel Breuer as his examination piece. Alfred Forbát, employed by Gropius's design office, supervised the finishing touches, and he designed the garage and the chauffeur's house near the rear entrance to the garden; this latter is still extant, but the rest of the building was destroyed during the war. Albers's stained glass windows and Joost Schmidt's wood carvings employed geometric, abstract patterns.
Schmidt's commission specifically included the illustration of towns where Sommerfeld owned lumberyards, with the names of the towns carved in. On the basis of the surviving photos, the interior of the house, offering a broad spectrum of the uses of wood in interior decoration, presented a novel appearance, made highly unusual by the contrast between the warmth and cosiness of the materials and the coolly objective spirit of the abstract geometric ornamentation.

36 Sommerfeld did the greatest service to the Bauhaus by commissioning its members with the design and execution of this building. He was so satisfied with it that he entrusted Gropius with further commissions, and subsequently proved to be the one reliable patron of the Bauhaus. Frank Whitford notes that the fact that Sommerfeld, a Berlin resident, gave this exceptional opportunity to the school for summing up the state of its art at the time is eloquent proof that this type of enlightened patronage was a sine qua non of the Bauhaus's survival. It was a pity that such a commission had to come from far-off Berlin. Whitford considers it a shortcoming of the Bauhaus that old-fashioned handicrafts were allowed to triumph in this building, without the least trace of more advanced technologies; he also notes with disapproval that the commission had to come through Gropius's private architectural office. All this is indisputably true, but only as a result of a whole series of such projects would the Bauhaus have been in a position to receive direct commissions. However, Sommerfeld remained an isolated example. The Sommerfeld house was indeed an expressive building, within its own limits; both its exterior effects and its interior decor created dramatic light/dark contrasts, while the geometric decorative elements resolved into asymmetric, disquietingly vibrant patterns. In a way they resembled expressionist woodcuts, just as certain elements of Schreyer's stage sets did.

NOTES
2. Gropius. 'An die Werkstättenleiter', 22 April 1922, Bauhaus Archiv. Berlin, Gropius documents, unit no. 75.
6. Ibid.
7. Ibid.


10. About this, Itten writes in Design and Form, p. 8: 'From 1913 to 1916 I was a student of Adolf Hötzle in Stuttgart.' Around this time Oskar Schlemmer, Willi Baumeister and Otto Meyer also studied with Hötzle.


13. Ibid., p. 9.


19. Ibid.


21. Ibid.


24. Ibid., p. 45.

25. Itten. 'Tagebuch': in Rotzler (ed.). op. cit., p. 60; quoted In Wick, op. cit., p. 94.

26. Itten, Design and Form, op. cit., p. 147.


28. Francisconio. op. cit., p. 176; also the minutes of the 26 October 1920 meeting of the Masters' Council. Bauhaus Archiv, Berlin. Gropius documents, unit no. 7/5.


32. Ibid.

33. Ibid.

34. Roters. op. cit., p. 57.

35. Ibid.

36. George Muche, Blickpunkt - Sturm, Dada, Bauhaus. Gegenwart. Wasmuth, Tübingen, 1965, p. 168: 'I promised myself that never in my life would I let my hands prepare a textile design. I have kept this promise. I had intended to be ready for painting, for I knew that one day it would be reborn.'

37. Itten; see letter to Josef Matthias Hauer; in Rotzler, op. cit., p. 68.
40. Roters. op. cit., p. 66.
43. Roters, op. cit., p. 67.
46. Nerdinger, op. cit., p. 44.
47. W. Pehnt. quoted by Nerdinger. Ibid.
48. Ibid.
49. Whitford, op. cit., p. 77.
Chapter 7. Time

1 'THE development of art is a thing of slow growth. It requires time and plenty of it. It cannot be forced. What would have become of me with insufficient time to struggle through my problems? ... I found Gropius open to discussion. Only he wants to see quick results. For him, "It takes too long. It takes too long." Lyonel Feininger, in this letter from the summer of 1919, touched on a key motif. Gropius was forced into a race against time, as he well knew he would be, even before the founding of the Bauhaus: when an institution is run by outside money, the investors want returns in the shortest possible time. When in the summer of 1919 he recommended that 'for the time being we shall refrain from public exhibitions ... so that, in these turbulent times, we can collect our thoughts', he was fully aware that this would be very difficult; there would not be enough time for what was most needed, the organic development of inner life and the creative process.

2 One facet of the conflict between Itten and Gropius was the disparity between their attitudes towards time as a factor in politics. Itten could afford to stay aloof, and, aside from Mazdaznan, devote all of his attention to teaching work - all the more so since it was Gropius's official duty to deal with the provincial government and other authorities, and to attempt to bring the spontaneous inner development of the Bauhaus on a common denominator with the tolerance level of Weimar public opinion.

3 In early 1921 the balance of power at the Bauhaus, in both personal and artistic respects, tipped so much in favour of Itten, that Gropius felt a need to assert himself. The hiring of Oskar Schlemmer and Paul Klee provided an occasion to moderate Itten's influence. At the 7 February 1921 meeting of the Masters' Council Gropius announced that 'it was impracticable that Itten and Muche should have to fulfil the form-master duties of every workshop. He felt it was likely that in the future every master should conduct one or two workshops. Itten objected that this way the continuity with the course of formal studies would be broken, since the other masters had no contact with that' (i.e., the Preliminary Course). On 15 March the workshops were redistributed. Accordingly, the stone-carving workshop was now headed by Schlemmer, the wood sculpture shop by Muche, the cabinet-making shop went to Gropius, the printing workshop to Feininger, and bookbinding to Klee (who had been contracted to teach a course in 'form studies'); Muche remained the form instructor for weaving, and Itten retained the artistic direction of the metal workshop and wall- and glass-painting shops. However, Gropius urged closer
contacts between the workshops for the sake of a spirit of cooperation at the school, and therefore requested the masters to give a series of lectures to acquaint the others with the work of their respective shops. 'Since Mr Itten has the richest store of experience among us in this respect, he will begin the series of lectures,' Gropius declared.

The problem, however, was not so much the attunement of the artistic-formal aspects of the various workshops, but the discrepancies between the theoretical formal studies - the Preliminary Course - and the practical workshop activities. After the completion of the Preliminary Course the students entered one of the workshops - the one found most suitable for the unfolding of their abilities on the basis of the assignments chosen and analysed with such sensitivity and empathy according to Itten's art-pedagogical methodology. Once in the workshop, however, suddenly there was no more of the fine-honed attention to the smallest details of their inner vibrations and Impulses: they were now expected to master certain tricks of the trade, they had to learn a handicraft. Notwithstanding the dual leadership of workshops, there was no return to the highly charged psychic energies of the Preliminary Course; the goal was no longer self-realization, but the realization of an object. And no amount of such activity could supplant the everyday contact with Itten's magnetic personality and readily proffered philosophy of life.

The balance between the Preliminary Course and the Bauhaus workshops was upset. Or, to put it more precisely, in spite of its small extent relative to the whole, the Preliminary Course, through Itten, had come to carry such surplus weight that it was impossible to give it all the room it demanded - having overgrown its own framework. Uncertainty and tension reigned among the students; more and more of them left the Bauhaus for walking tours of Italy. Oskar Schlemmer wrote in a letter to his wife on 3 March 1921: 'In strict confidence now: things look bad for the Bauhaus! Six more students want to leave for Italy.'

'PEOPLE CRITICIZE THE CAUSE THEY ESPOUS' THE VAN DOESBURG EPISODE

There was another circumstance that further complicated the tensions at the Bauhaus in 1921-2. One of the founding members of the Dutch De Stijl movement, the editor of its periodical and in fact its most active proponent. Theo van Doesburg (originally C.E.M. Küpper, also writing under the pseudonyms I.K. Bonset and Aldo Camini), had arrived at Weimar. The programme of De Stijl In part almost coincided with that of the Bauhaus - as far as it concerned reshaping the human environment and following collective goals - and in part opposed it, insofar as De Stijl, as the name itself indicates, meant the creation of a style: a uniform, universally valid, new style that would foreshadow the universal harmony the movement's members hoped to advance by their works. In 1920, van Doesburg, the group's internationally most mobile member, made a grand tour of Europe with the purpose of spreading the teachings of De Stijl. Doesburg himself was an architect, and his many personal contacts were primarily with architects: this is how in 1920 he first met, through Bruno Taut in Berlin, Walter Gropius and the draughtsmen at his office, Adolf Meyer and Alfred Forbát. At the 7 February 1921 meeting of the Masters' Council the minutes record the reading of two letters from Doesburg requesting approval for an article he intended to write about the Bauhaus. 'However, since Doesburg's Intentions were not favourably received, Mr Gropius undertook the task of writing a
letter refusing the request.\(^5\) This was the first sign of friction between the Bauhaus and van Doesburg.

6 As background to the rapidly developing animosity between Theo van Doesburg and the Bauhaus we must note that the De Stijl movement and the Bauhaus were entities of very different specific gravity. De Stijl never became an organized group, but was a loosely affiliated banding together of like-minded avant-garde artists and intellectuals, among whom only the painters observed closely the theosophical teachings about harmony that assigned a special role to right angles enclosed by straight horizontal and vertical lines, and to primary colours. Besides this doctrine, which rigidified into a dogma, the movement had little else in common. The periodical De Stijl was published by van Doesburg at his own expense, and one reason he needed international contacts was the relative indifference shown by the Dutch middle class towards the movement. In the hurly-burly of the European art scene more than one avant-garde art periodical was born, only to flourish briefly and pass away, reflecting the fortunes of the art movements grouped around them. However, aside from VKhUTEMAS in far-off Moscow, the Bauhaus was the only state-funded modernist art institute in all of Europe. Regardless of the struggles it cost to assure the Bauhaus of its share in the Thuringian state budget, the school still towered as a rock-solid bastion over the frail and unfunded avant-garde groups. It was able to purchase materials and supplies, could afford to pay salaries to its faculty (all of them respected leading avant-garde artists!), was qualified to issue diplomas, possessed the status of a legal entity - and occupied that privileged position in the progressive, opposition wing of the official, professional establishment which, if we are to believe Tom Wolfe's reasoning,\(^6\) is the dream of most avant-garde artists. De Stijl, or any other group of artists, could not even dream of receiving such institutional support.

7 How and why van Doesburg found himself in Weimar is difficult to establish on the basis of conflicting memoirs. He himself stated in the 1927 jubilee issue of De Stijl that Gropius at their first meeting had invited him for a visit, and later, during his visit in 1921, invited him to work at the Bauhaus.\(^7\) As opposed to this, Gropius in several letters claims that he had never invited Doesburg to the Bauhaus. 'He came of his own accord, because he was interested in our courses. He had hopes of receiving a teaching appointment at the Bauhaus, but I did not give him a job, for I found him to be aggressive and a fanatic who held narrow-minded, doctrinaire views, without the ability to brook criticism.'\(^8\) As Lothar Schreyer recalls it, at the time that van Doesburg showed up, there happened to be an unfilled position at the Bauhaus to which they had intended to invite a Constructivist artist. Doesburg would have been the logical choice, since he had spent so much time in Weimar and was in personal contact with Gropius, but his name did not come up among the nominees.\(^9\)

8 Thus van Doesburg, who may actually have had hopes of a Bauhaus teaching position, moved to Weimar. Adolf Meyer found a studio for him, and one of the Bauhaus students, Karl-Peter Röhl, offered the use of his own studio for van Doesburg's lectures. Van Doesburg informed Meyer of his impending move: 'Soon I intend to travel to Weimar, and work there for a while. I believe this way I can contribute to the realization of a monumental collective style. This has been the aim of our group, to which the efforts of the Bauhaus are in such close proximity. Perhaps in Weimar we shall succeed in creating a new centre of gravity to oppose the individualism of Paris.'\(^10\)
For a while, Doesburg had hoped that he could participate in the Bauhaus's work - although he had in mind a Bauhaus according to his own theories. Meanwhile he set up a counter-course of his own in Weimar. There were two aspects of the Bauhaus that he objected to: Expressionism based on individualism, especially as practised by Itten, and the fact that Gropius had advertised a school of architecture but was not teaching architecture at the Bauhaus, while maintaining a private architectural office within the walls of the school. On both points his attack proved effective. The young people who had recently entered the Bauhaus - Karl-Peter Röhl, Werner Graeff, Walter Dexel, Kurt Schmidt, Helmhut von Erffa and others - were in search of a philosophy of life just like their slightly older fellow-students, but had not yet come to accept Itten's teachings, or else were immune to them. So they, as well as others not enrolled at the Bauhaus, found a treasure trove in van Doesburg's lectures, with their consistent, simple and incontrovertible insistence on order and harmony, heralding the coming of a new style based on modern mechanization, composed of horizontal-vertical coordinates. The masters at the Bauhaus looked on at Doesburg's activities in Weimar with growing disapproval. Doesburg himself, naturally with some exaggeration, claimed that they 'wished him to leave', that 'in the winter of 1921, his windows had been broken; what was more, traces of revolver shots could be found on them [there is no other evidence to corroborate this]. In addition, Bauhaus students were "prohibited" from attending Stijl events in Weimar.'

Van Doesburg was filled with extraordinary resentment. In January 1921 he wrote to a friend: 'In Weimar I have caused great havoc. So this is the famous academy with the most up-to-date teachers I spoke with students every evening, spreading the toxin of the new ideas everywhere. There will be a new issue of De Stijl, and it will be more radical than ever before. I feel enormous energies stirring within me, and I am convinced that our ideas will conquer all.' Werner Graeff in his memoirs puts it this way: Doesburg's 'only purpose in staying in Weimar was to do battle from outside.'

Van Doesburg had considerable influence on Schlemmer. In the light of his views Schlemmer came to see things more critically: 'To give you an idea: the Bauhaus has no course in architecture ... And yet the Bauhaus stands for the primacy of architecture. The blame falls on Gropius, who is the only architect at the Bauhaus but has no time for teaching. A programme could be set up (theoretically), but it would be hard to implement ... I am not resentful and eager for a putsch ... What I would like to see is this: more architecture at the Bauhaus, more discipline in the other fields; the Bauhaus should seek out, collect, and preserve all the possible laws of artistic production.' A year and a half later he writes: 'What do I want? To create a style in painting which springs from a necessity beyond fad and aesthetic form, which can hold its own against the perfect utility of functional objects and machines. - This style must thus necessarily be ethical in nature ... I do not believe in craftsmanship... Handmade objets d'art in the age of the machine and technology would be a luxury for the rich, lacking a broad popular basis and roots in the people.' All of these ideas are echoes of van Doesburg; they stayed with Schlemmer for a long time.

It would seem that Doesburg did not refrain from intrigues, either. In November 1921 Feininger writes: 'Yesterday I had a visit from van Doesburg. We had a long talk together. He at least is very real and of healthy flesh and blood. He was rather explicit on Monsieur Itten. It seems this champion of theosophy at times does not act up to the role. He is said to have ripped down my work and to have left hardly a shred of my person, which is
gratifying. Anyhow he did it publicly - he should come to grips with me and we might get even.' Regardless of what Itten said about Feininger in private or public, Doesburg was obviously inciting a rift within the Bauhaus by setting Feininger against Itten.

In addition to his efforts to deepen the polarization within the Bauhaus, van Doesburg became engaged in a large-scale International organizing activity. In fact he and Gropius had similar motivations: just as Gropius had perceived the world-renowned town of Weimar as the possible capital of a 'republic of the spirit', so van Doesburg had in mind a European perspective and international ambitions when he approached Weimar as a new artistic centre potentially opposed to Paris. But he was determined that it would be under his flag that Weimar should achieve equal rank with Paris.

His wounded feelings merely inflated the scope of his ambitions. In 1922, when it became obvious that he would not receive a teaching post at the Bauhaus - Gropius's hiring of Kandinsky in June had clinched this fact - van Doesburg was moved to take extreme action. In September of that year he launched a concerted attack from all sides on the Bauhaus.

The first International Congress of Progressive Artists, held in Dusseldorf in May 1922, gave him the idea to convene an International Congress of Constructivists and Dadaists in September - of all places, in Weimar. On this occasion he called the Bauhaus 'an art-hospital infected by idiots, Mazdaznan, and spineless Expressionism', and wrote in the same vein on the pages of his Dadaist periodical Me cano, where he made fun of the absolute incompetence of the 'masters', and asked: 'could it be that the students have greater abilities than their masters?'

The sharpest and most extreme attack, indicating that van Doesburg had been insulted to the core, came in an article probably written by van Doesburg but signed by the Hungarian Vilmos Huszár, one of the founders of De Stijl. The piece appeared in the September 1922 issue of De Stijl, in connection with the summer exhibition at the Bauhaus, and in full awareness of the ongoing struggle of the Bauhaus to obtain continued financial support from the Thuringian parliament. It concluded by asking three questions:

- Can the announced goals be attained in the face of such obstinate individualism, which allows everyone to follow his own inclinations?
- Is there any chance of reunifying all the different crafts when there is no training based on a unified concept?
- Can we justify, in a country economically and politically so bankrupt, the continued appropriation of huge sums to an institute such as the Bauhaus today?

My answer is: NO - NO – NO

The unproductiveness of the current Bauhaus makes the continued support of the institute as a 'diploma-distributing' school a crime against civilization and the state. There is something rotten at the Bauhaus. Only radical measures can bring improvement. The 'artist-masters' have to be fired and the foundations of workshop activities must be rebuilt on strictly rationalist principles.

Van Doesburg's ravings were not without cause. In 1922 the survival of the avant-garde was indeed a matter of life and death. The fervid Utopias that arose in the 1910s and placed their hopes not only in the revolution, but, as György Lukács said, international revolution, continued to balloon until they peaked around 1922, when, their fire spent,
the dreamers of Utopias found themselves back on the damp and cold ground of reality. Van Doesburg, the Constructivist painter, designer, architect and Dadaist poet, felt these changes on his own skin, and well understood the meaning of Hans Richter and El Lissitzky's statement at the Dusseldorf Congress in May 1922: 'Today we are still in between two societies: one of which has no use for us; the other whose time has not yet come.' At this time, in 1922, van Doesburg could very well have used the Bauhaus for the gratification of his overweening ambition, an appropriate throne for the high priest of the European avant-garde. Indeed, it would have seemed his only chance for survival as a progressive artist and for salvaging avant-garde values for a new historical era.

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18 Under the constellation of this historical shift the conflict between Itten and Gropius came to be increasingly tense.

19 Itten took a twofold line of attack against Gropius and the limitation of his own role. At the 1 October 1921 meeting of the Masters' Council he proposed - aware of his own popularity and influence - that the students should be allowed a free choice of form masters. On the other front, he declared against the functioning of the Bauhaus, an educational institution, in any business capacity. He objected to the judging of the students' work by anyone other than the masters - such as the firm buying their works - lest the school turn into 'a source of income for the state'. But this is precisely what the Bauhaus was being forced to allow, no matter how much it went against the grain of its pedagogical principles, because only an output of objects usable by the population could justify it in front of the constantly hostile Weimar public. There was no time for certain essential components of the pedagogic effort: the making of long-range plans for years ahead, the process of maturation, the possibility, the right to make mistakes. They had to produce immediately. Besides, the students' living expenses had to be covered. In the midst of rapidly worsening inflation and the hard reality of a country at an economic nadir, this was the only chance for generating some income to enable the students to stay on at the Bauhaus. Gropius was not able to accept Itten's proposals, and this further sharpened the conflict between them. After this, Itten no longer bothered to observe proper procedures. 'Itten allegedly carries Mazdazan principles into the classroom, differentiating between the adherents and non-adherents on the basis of ideology rather than on the basis of achievement. So apparently a special clique is being formed and is splitting the Bauhaus into two camps, the teachers also being drawn in. Itten has managed to have his course made the only required one; he further controls the important workshops and has a rather considerable, admirable ambition: to put his stamp on the Bauhaus.' So writes Oskar Schlemmer in December 1921. Now this is the situation: Gropius is an excellent diplomat, businessman, and practical genius. In the Bauhaus he has a large private office, and he receives commissions for building villas in Berlin. Berlin, business and lucrative commissions, partially or hardly understood by the students (whom Gropius wants to help get jobs this way) - these are scarcely the best prerequisites for Bauhaus work. Itten is right to attack this practice and demand that the students be allowed to work undisturbed. But Gropius contends that we should not shut out life and reality, a danger (if it is a danger) implied by Itten's method; for instance, workshop students might come to find meditation and ritual more important than their work.
By involving Mazdaznan in his teaching activities Itten not only infringed the constitution of the Bauhaus, but also sinned against the purity of his own pedagogical principles and methods. At this time he used Mazdaznan both as an ideology and as an instrument in his struggle for power. The tenets of Mazdaznan, in addition to and in place of their meaning in and of themselves, now received a local validity vis-à-vis the current situation: to be an adherent of Mazdaznan meant first and foremost taking Itten's side against Gropius.

The Bauhaus masters observed with concern the deepening of this conflict, for the split into two parties could easily have meant the end of the school. Two days after Schlemmer's letter, quoted above, Lothar Schreyer wrote to Gropius: 'I fear an open conflict between you and Mr Itten … Such a conflict would be destructive. It will destroy the essence of the Bauhaus. You have within your power to force Mr Itten to stop his work; Mr Itten has within his power the capability of making your work much more difficult. The Bauhaus would not be able to survive either eventuality … I ask you and Mr Itten not to allow matters to reach that point… Both of you should acknowledge that the Bauhaus is a collective effort, and must stay that way. As long as this duel is not resolved, every concrete problem arising in class or workshop, every organizational issue will be nothing else than an instrument of this conflict.'

Even Paul Klee, whose usual taciturnity and impartiality in public affairs earned him the nickname 'The Good Lord', was moved to comment, trying to moderate the passions, from his own ethereal, cosmic viewpoint: 'I welcome the fact that forces so differently oriented are working together in our Bauhaus. I also approve the conflict between these forces if its effect is evidenced in the final accomplishment. To meet an obstacle is a good test of strength for every force - provided it is an obstacle of an objective nature. Value judgments are always subjectively limited, and thus a negative judgment on someone else's work can have no significance for the work as a whole. In general, there is no right or wrong; rather, our work lives and develops through the interplay of opposing forces, just as in nature the good and the bad work together productively in the long run.'

With the exception of Muche, who stuck to his view that 'Each master approaches the students in his own manner, teaches in his own manner, and conducts his workshop in his own manner' - which was, in this case, not a general statement of theory, but a defence of Itten's rights - the Bauhaus masters, instead of taking sides in the struggle, felt it was more important to preserve unity and the school's integrity by having Gropius and Itten reach a compromise and thereby assure the undisturbed continuance of work. Although they all considered Itten's activities and influence excessive, no one wanted his departure, not even Gropius, whose view of the situation, in the final analysis, was similar to Klee's. He wrote in a letter: 'I got entangled in a difficult duel with Itten. I want to remain strong, but at the same time I wish him to stay; both of us are essential.' (Emphasis added.) Schlemmer develops this in more detail: Itten's departure 'would certainly mean a loss for the Bauhaus. Pedagogically he is more skilled than the rest, and he has a decided talent for leadership. I sense all too keenly the lack of those qualities in myself. Furthermore: when Gropius need no longer fear the strong opposition of Itten, he himself will constitute by far the greater threat.'

Thus there was general agreement that Itten should be retained because of his indispensable value to the community, while his personal sphere of influence and the extent of his activities should be limited to the channels where they would be of optimal benefit to the entire Bauhaus community. Not only the masters, but by this time the
students as well, began to see Itten in this light. Helmuth von Erffa writes, 'Meanwhile a silent revolt against Itten was growing. It came into the open in December 1921, when the Bauhaus celebrated a very expressionistic Christmas Eve. Gifts were opened in the presence of all and greetings read and shown about. Itten received from a group of students the equivalent of a joking valentine which requested him to kindly stay out of some of the workshops. When I asked older students about it I was told that he was disturbing them and trying to give advice in technical matters he knew nothing about.'

The Bauhaus was indeed on the way towards functioning as a whole, an organism striving to reach a state of equilibrium and inner harmony. If there were two valid principles at a given moment of history, then both of them would be represented within the walls of the school. Schlemmer's observation that without Itten to keep him in check, Gropius would 'constitute by far the greater threat', points to the fact that not only principles, but individuals, too, need to be kept in check. The victor in an obvious power struggle will understandably arouse concern in the members of the community, no matter which side wins: his increased power goes with a decrease in the forces that kept it in check. At the same time, in order for the spiritual 'whole' to come about as originally conceived by Gropius, both principles as described by Schlemmer, the mystical and the rationalistic, represented by Itten and Gropius respectively, should have come to terms, and by coexisting and collaborating in peace should have shown an example of true and profound tolerance, understanding and selflessness. Voluntary self-limitation was needed.

Sooner or later the actual conflict latent in the situation was bound to resurface: this occurred in January 1922. Gropius found out that in the cabinet-making workshop, which, according to the earlier decision, belonged to him, Itten, without prior consultation, had initiated new projects and was ordering fresh supplies. Gropius wrote to Itten, requesting him not to start new work in this workshop. He referred to their agreement, according to which Gropius would not interfere with projects already under way, while requesting Itten to honour the other provision of the agreement, by not starting any new work projects. Itten replied that the work involved had been planned for nine months, and its realization anticipated for two and a half years. It would benefit both the students and the Bauhaus. 'And now, instead, your architectural commissions will have to be executed, which I feel to be harmful under the conditions, and therefore oppose.' In the same letter he resigned from his position in the cabinet-making, metalwork, wood- and stone-sculpture workshops, and refused any responsibility having to do with these. 'So my activity in the workshops is over. - I am limiting the time devoted to teaching to the number of hours given by other masters; in other words, I am ceasing my entire compulsory teaching load. I am also informing you that I have lost all of my deeper interest in the Bauhaus.'

This was an overreaction and it might have been partially precipitated by the Christmastime practical joke, and the general feeling that the changing times and tastes were pointing away from all that Itten stood for. Gropius's response was glum. He reminded Itten that in effect nothing had really happened to justify such a series of steps; at the same time he stated that the tensions between the two of them were due to personal, not to objective, causes. 'For some time past you have shown a regular hatred towards my person ... and this, much to my regret, paralyzes our collaboration.' He requested Itten to continue his teaching until the end of the semester, for the sake of the students. Itten agreed to this, concluding his reply: 'In the hope that I have withdrawn
sufficiently far away for you to freely realize your plans and intentions, without my observations standing in your way, and in order to end all arguments, I close this final communication - Johannes Itten.131

28 So Itten proved unwilling to accept his new, limited role; he, too, wanted all or nothing. He was ready to give up his irreplaceable and invaluable pedagogic work because his personal ambitions were not about to be fulfilled. I have already quoted Gropius's statement: 'I am coming to Weimar full of excitement and with the firm intention of creating one great Whole, or else, failing that, to disappear quickly.' Van Doesburg and Itten were motivated by the same ambition and pride that refused to put up with failure. These lines could have been written by Itten, perhaps the only difference being that at the outset Itten's Ideas were not as well defined as Gropius's. He had an informal, spiritual leadership in mind, intending to become no mere director, but the actual, essential centre of things.

29 It seemed that Itten's extremism and inflexibility, his intolerance in a religious sense, had precipitated a decision on Gropius's part to take a stand and announce a new turn of events. After his exchange of letters with Itten, in February 1922 Gropius took the step that the others had feared, and brought the affair in front of the inner forum of the Bauhaus. He addressed a circular to the Bauhaus masters, requesting their response. 'Master Itten has again faced us with a decision: either to produce individualized pieces of work that go counter to the commercially oriented outside world or to seek contacts with industry … I look for unity in the fusion, not in the separation, of these approaches to life.'34 Then, in reformulating one of the essential points of the 1919 Bauhaus programme, that of sequestration from society, he went on to proclaim its very opposite: 'The Bauhaus could become a haven for eccentrics if it were to lose contact with the work and working methods of the outside world. Its responsibility consists in educating people to recognize the basic nature of the world in which they live, and in combining their knowledge with their imagination so as to be able to create typical forms that symbolize that world … If we were to reject the world around us completely, the only remaining way out would be the "romantic island". I see a danger to our youth in the indications of a wild romanticism'.35

30 Gropius naturally did not raise objections to Itten's personality, but to all that he stood for. In this memorandum, dating from early 1922, sensing the gradual lifting of the Expressionist fog, Gropius anticipates later events, and questions even the programme of crafts training that he formulated earlier. He reaches at the same time towards the future of industrial design and towards his earlier ideas about it.

The entire 'architecture' and the 'arts and crafts' of the last generation ... is, with very few exceptions, a lie. In all of these products one recognizes the false and spastic effort 'to make art'. They actually stand in the way of the development of pure joy in the art of 'building'. Today's architect has forfeited his right to exist… The engineer, on the other hand, unhampered by aesthetics and historical inhibitions, has arrived at clear and organic forms... How the broad gulf between the activity we practise in our workshops and the present level of the crafts and industry outside will some day be closed, that is the unknown quantity ... It is possible that the work in the Bauhaus workshops will lead more and more to the production of single prototypes (which will serve as guides to the craftsman and industry).36

31 The Bauhaus masters responded to these reflections. Muche rose to defend art as sharply as Henry van de Velde did in 1914. Like his distant colleague, he, too, took his stand by
analysing the situation - and thus, defending Itten: 'It is my opinion that today, as ever, art is still an end in itself, and for people unequivocally gifted as artists it will always remain an end in itself, even where it seems to be applied to other ends. I am afraid that by making the denial of the formal (l'art pour l'art) a basic tenet, the freedom of the creative individuality becomes too curtailed. The picture that has no purpose is just as originally creative as the functional machine of the technician.'

Gerhard Marcks, whose response was jointly signed by Klee, Feininger, Muche, Itten, and Schlemmer, wrote down a symbolic story about an artist who dreamed of a colour composition for a flowerbed, and handed his plan over to a gardener for realization. The gardener shook his head and protested: he could not plant the drought-loving cactus next to a water-lily, nor would it make sense to plant a flower blooming in October next to one flowering in April, for the desired effect would not be seen. Whereupon the painter exclaimed, 'You're no gardener at all!' Marcks went on to conclude, 'The moral is: as far as the aesthetics of the machine are concerned, the Bauhaus came into being from our hope, groping in the darkness, that our students would become what, alas, none of us were - both masters of form and masters of handicraft, in one and the same person.'

The confrontation of Gropius and Itten leads us back to a statement in the Manifesto, 'art cannot be taught'. By drawing a qualitative and gradational distinction between art and craft (the artist is an exalted craftsman), Gropius divided creative work into two phases: the first one could be taught and was therefore socially controllable - this was craftsmanship, technical proficiency which flexibly adapts to modern industrial technology and contemporary requirements - and the second one not teachable, not controllable, and inevitably not even directable, which we may call Intuition, individual inspiration, or, as Groplus did, 'rare moments of inspiration'. And since the Bauhaus was a collective, the experimental model of a 'great Whole', it was of prime importance that whatever could be taught should be made public property - while that which could not be taught could not be shared completely by any community.

Behind this simple thesis, 'art cannot be taught', lay a conflict reduced to the opposition of the individual and the collective; in Ralner Wick's words, the polarity of 'the autonomous artist versus the socially committed designer's mentality'.

By insisting on the rights of the autonomous artist, Itten compelled Gropius to take the side of the socially committed designer, no matter how much the latter would have liked the peaceful unification of these two functions.

Everyday reality - the external pressure for proof of utility, and the internal movements towards inner equilibrium at the Bauhaus - demanded the acceptance of one, and the rejection of the other of these two alternatives: creative work was either going to be made collective, or not. Essentially this meant a critique of Groplus's notion of the joining and fruitful collaboration of art and technology, of artist and craftsman. The artist, in this case Itten, refused to collaborate or partake in work processes that were not based on artistic values. In his Manifesto Gropius had distinguished between art and craft most probably for the sake of a clear distinction between distant and immediate goals, as well as out of respect for the unteachable component. He did not intend to exercise the least control or influence over what, according to his lights, was neither controllable nor knowable. At the same time, as his June 1919 address testifies, he attempted to place art in its entirety beyond the pale of the school's concerns. From the viewpoint of the Bauhaus as a collective, he decided that for the time being the potentially sharable, and therefore teachable, manual techniques had to be kept separate from the unknowable
creative energies swirling at the depths of the individual psyche. He had to present everyone with a 'tabula rasa' on which no one had any 'positional advantage' by way of some given ability that was not 'acquired through hard work'.

36 Possibly Gropius himself had not realized that he had imagined the Bauhaus along the lines of a well-designed functional object, in which only those details are beautiful that are also useful for the object as a whole. Yet it was just this idea, stemming from Gropius's original value system - and that this notion, although relegated to the background for some years, had remained unchanged, is evinced by a 'slip' in the Manifesto: 'unproductive artist' - which endowed the meanings of the words artist and craftsman with certain ethical overtones. This made the 'artist' - Itten - stand for an individualistic attitude that ignored public interest and the creation of 'forms readily understood by everyone', and instead of acting as a participating member of society, remained a 'solitary eccentric' imprisoned in a 'romantic insularity' - in contrast to the designer who turns to address the needs of the community. Such an opposition meant a drawing away from the spirit of the Manifesto, from the proclamation of the union of 'architects, painters, sculptors', and approached the views held by a society hostile to avant-garde art about the incomprehensible and cranky 'modern artist' and the 'honest craftsman'. This was the road leading to the extreme where artistic talent and creativity would be labelled an 'apelike excitability'.

37 The Preliminary Course and the workshops comprised separate worlds, and their essential differences could only symptomatically and temporarily be glossed over by the fact that Itten extended the sphere of his activities to cover the workshops as well. For the workshops could not accommodate the enormous creative imagination and energies liberated by Itten's Preliminary Course in his students. All this had to be subordinated to professional discipline and technical constraints in the workshops, just as in Gerhard Marcks's parable: no matter how wonderful the colour compositions dreamed up by the students for their symbolic gardens, the basic characteristics of the various crafts made some of them physically impossible to realize. The conflict, translated into the language of Bauhaus praxis, meant that either Itten had to take over total direction of the programme, no matter what dilettantism this would bring to the workshops, or else the Preliminary Course had to be altered radically so that it acted entirely in the spirit of, and as preparation for, the subsequent workshop training.

38 Even though the issue, in words and deeds as regards the inner structure of the Bauhaus, was the role and meaning of the arts in the value system of the school, the rest of the painting masters, Klee, Kandinsky, Schreyer and Schlemmer, did not come to the defence of Itten and autonomous creative freedom. They, too, thought in terms of the situation, and refused to interfere in the single combat of Itten and Gropius. In spite of all theoretical aspects, this was clearly a private conflict, an affair of honour that concerned only the two of them.

39 Schlemmer analysed the struggle of these two men from a more distant perspective. 'These two alternatives strike me as typical of current trends in Germany. On the one hand, the influence of oriental culture, the cult of India, also a return to nature In the Wandervogel movement and the others like it; also communes, vegetarianism, Tolstoyism, reaction against the war; and, on the other hand, the American spirit, progress, the marvels of technology and Invention, the urban environment... Or are progress (expansion) and self-fulfilment (introspection) mutually exclusive?"
Above and beyond personal ambitions and rivalries, the higher historical forces evidently had a say in the outcome of this episode in the eternal struggle of the two principles. The awesome clashes of rationalism and mysticism, exalted utilitarianism and the Irrational disguised behind a mask of reason, were to follow each other in rapid succession on the German horizon. Itten and Gropius’s conflict was merely one humble scene in a vast drama, one that moreover did not result in a synthesis, as a result of the playwright’s whim in granting rationalism a brief reprieve.

In the end, Gropius managed to stay on top of the situation. The Bauhaus masters placed greater value on the survival of the school than on the hegemony of their private philosophies. Thanks to his memorandum, and the self-restraint of the masters, bringing his fight with Itten into the open did not deteriorate into ad hominem attacks, but instead directed attention towards such unsolved issues, of concern for everyone at the Bauhaus, as the twofold leadership of workshops, art and craft, the relation of art to the machine, the reconciliation of communal interests with the unfolding of the individual, and contacts with factories.

Meanwhile van Doesburg continued to offer his rival course In town (Schlemmer had already turned away from him); Gropius had already sent his letter inviting Wassily Kandinsky, which would be delivered at the Kremlin by Karl Radek, and in April-May the exhibition of the Bauhaus students' work opened, to travel later In the year to Calcutta, with the help of Rabindranath Tagore. The exhibition displayed mostly works created in the Preliminary Course, accompanied by a few workshop pieces. Itten, who wrote the text of the pamphlet accompanying the exhibition of his students' work, emphasized, by way of a last plea, 'The personality of each student is allowed to develop freely in his work in order to enable him to contribute to the practical realization of the common idea. The exhibition was not a success; the public at large was scared away by the futurist-Dadaist and Expressionist features, while those to whom this kind of thing would have meant something - van Doesburg and his close associate El Lissitzky - held precisely Itten's activity to be the most retrograde at the Bauhaus, and judged these works to be confused and meaningless from a Constructivist point of view.

In the summer of 1922 the masters of the Bauhaus, too, participated in an exhibition at the Weimar Landesmuseum, where, in the rooms on the right-hand side, the 'First Thuringian Art Exhibition' showed traditional paintings by the masters of the reorganized fine arts academy, among them Klemm and Engelmann, while in the rooms on the left Feininger, Klee, Itten, Marcks, Muche, Schreyer and a few abstract painters of Weimar showed their works. This exhibition was of course condemned, in close association with the students' works, the general opinion being that at the Bauhaus 'sick souls are misleading the youth into useless activities'. The Thuringian press - in contrast to the nationwide acclaim - renewed its attacks on the Bauhaus. Again the school's position became critical. The political right - which in June had assassinated in Berlin the foreign minister Walter Rathenau, who happened to be a Jew - reached such extremes in the Thuringian papers as the article by the architect Arthur Buschmann in the Jenaische Zeitung, in which he referred to the maquettes of a modem housing project at the Bauhaus exhibition as 'an attempt to return to the primitive art forms of inferior races', and took the opportunity to issue a warning about the dangers of miscegenation.

One month before the publication of this article Kandinsky had accepted Gropius's invitation, and the man who was perhaps the most respected modem artist in Europe joined the Bauhaus faculty. In November of the same year the Russian Art Exhibition (the
first to be held abroad since 1917) opened at the Van Diemen gallery in Berlin; with this. Constructivism appeared on German soil to start its afterlife as an international art movement. Although the term 'Constructivism' came into use only as late as 1921, its actual active period occurred years earlier; its Utopias, as the Russian artists now arriving in Berlin discovered to their surprise, belonged to the same spheres of thought as the ideas of the radical German artists. 'In Russia, during the seven years of total isolation, we faced the same problems as our friends in the west, without either of us being aware of this,' said Ilya Ehrenburg and El Lissitzky in May 1922 in Düsseldorf. However, the historical phase teeming with Utopias had passed. Oskar Schlemmer had noted this in his diary in June 1922; but its most moving expression came from the pen of a Russian writer, Mikhail Slonimsky, who put the following words into the mouth of a suicide revolutionary in his short story published in 1923, and most probably written in 1922:

I won't make a fuss, I'll shoot myself in the head ... We have shot in the head, crushed, annihilated everything that even slightly resembled the past. We have skipped forward a thousand years, a millennium separated us from those we exterminated ... In brief, I struggled against time and space, I wanted to make the future present. This had seemed possible in those panic-stricken, confused years when time seemed to vanish, but now that the panic has ceased, life again proceeds in time and space. And even if space can be conquered, time cannot. Life is again motivated by the same old things: love, money and fame.

NOTES

5. See this chapter, note 2.
13. Werner Graeff, 'The Bauhaus, the De Stijl group in Weimar and the Constructivist Congress of 1922'; in Neumann (ed.), op. cit., p. 76.
15. Schlemmer, Diary entry, November 1922; ibid., p. 132.
To Mr Moholy-Nagy, requesting him to read this letter at a meeting of the Masters' Council.

Yesterday I received a brochure from Mr Arno Müller, entitled 'The State Bauhaus and Its Director'. After reading this my impression was that the brochure was written chiefly for personal and political motives for the purpose of destroying the Bauhaus, using any sordid means available, thanks to the current political situation in Germany. It does not contain any proposals for reorganization. I was astonished that this brochure quoted an excerpt from an article I published in De Stijl in 1922, and did so without my permission, indeed without even notifying me in any manner. Furthermore, my article [Emphasis added.] was not even reprinted in its entirety. Among others, the last section was omitted, wherein I summed up my opinion of how the artistic and pedagogical direction of the Bauhaus should be implemented in line with the programme of 1919.

I am afraid that this might give the impression that I share the views of Fritz Hall and Miss Freytag von Loringhoven (with whom I find myself in the same boat).

This, as well as the undistinguished character of the brochure, compels me to take a stand.

Needless to say I had nothing to do with this brochure. I ask the masters of the State Bauhaus to indulge my broken German, and consider my sole and unalterable views on this matter:

When I first learned about the Bauhaus and its activity in the field of art I became extremely interested. Inasmuch as its strivings were similar to the Dutch endeavours already in progress, I intended to join the cause - without the slightest personal motivation - so that I could help the struggle with my artistic and propaganda activities, independently of the Bauhaus. (I recall what Mr Walter Groplus said about our 'Styl-work' in 1920, when I first showed him photographs: 'The artists of the Styl [sic] are much farther ahead than we, but we do not wish to nurture dogmas at the Bauhaus. Everyone should express his own creative individuality,' etc., etc.) When I travelled to Weimar (led not only by personal initiative) and began to work there Independently of the Bauhaus (letter to Mr Gropius), I received a totally different impression of the Bauhaus.

My apartment on Am Horn (and later my studio on Sch. Graben) became a meeting place for those persons who offered sharp criticism of the inner structure of the Bauhaus (with which I was unfamiliar).

These people were not simply opponents of the Bauhaus, but also its friends, masters and students, and close associates of the director. They were the ones who turned to me for criticism. At the time of my residence in Weimar I thought it very strange that the people interested in my ideas could only learn about them in a clandestine manner, and that there could be no possibility of developing such a new artistic approach at the Bauhaus, of all places. This did not seem to be consonant with the widely promulgated Bauhaus manifestos, such as: 'The exchange of ideas with representatives of the revolutionary art of neighbouring countries.' (I am quoting from memory.)

Instead of the 'friendly reception of foreign colleagues' I experienced only increasing narrow-mindedness and hostility.

This inexplicable behaviour of the Bauhaus leadership toward me, furtive, behind my back; the inner split within the Bauhaus; the contradictions between a (basically) sensible programme and its application in practice; the undisciplined work methods, the lack of any relation between master and master, master of form and master of technique, and master and student; the capricious, individualistic artistic production - in short: the entire dichotomy and dispersal of energies invited my criticism.

It is common knowledge, and my friends in Weimar will bear me out, that even if my criticism
was sharp, it originated exclusively in my artistic and theoretical differences with the Bauhaus, and was always based on its fundamental programme. (This was the subject of the article published in De Stijl.) Far was it from me to indulge in mudslinging, and I always firmly rejected any approaches towards that end.

My own criticism was always sincere and open, free of any personal interests.

I never attacked the Bauhaus as such, nor any single individual.

The chief points of my critique ('et quand-mème elle tourne') were as follows:

1. The discrepancy between the programmatic tasks and their implementation.
2. The impossibility of achieving the collective, integral work of architecture, for lack of discipline, for lack of the intellectual community uniting masters of form, technical masters and students.
3. The lack of a general leading idea.
4. The inclusion of purely personal views ('comme l'ampur sans fil...') in the creative process.
5. The development of metaphysical problems and speculations of a political, religious or other nature, instead of common efforts directed at realistic problems pertaining to creative work, etc.

My friends in Weimar will attest that my criticism was always exclusively directed at these perfectly impersonal points.

At the time I expressed my stand to various people in Weimar in the following manner 'I would be of an entirely different opinion if the Bauhaus were merely another free art school where students were expected to experiment according to their own inclinations. I would be happy that such a school existed. The Bauhaus, however, presented a programme, it seemed to espouse a mission, so I ask, how will it reach its goal, and realize its programme, when it scatters its energies in Mazdaznan, In Ittenism and individualistic artistic production?' This was my stand in Weimar in 1920-23. This opinion of mine referred to the centre of artistic reaction, to any and all academic sleeping powders and canned works of art!

I would like to make it clear that the Bauhaus is, in spite of everything, of enormous importance not only in the evolution of German art, but of universal art as well, inasmuch as it fulfils its cultural mission (that is: It helps the development of all creative potential).

Because of this significance of the Bauhaus, it will have no problems winning over the leading artists of Europe.

I am convinced that if we consider the potential of the Bauhaus without starting from its programme, but see it as a 'cultural phenomenon', then the opponents of Germany and of the Nordic point of view would be glad to hear of the Bauhaus's dissolution. (The German government emphasized the moral obligation of the Bauhaus.)

Do not believe that the artists of De Stijl take that stand. And do not think it of me, either. I ask you to recall the words of one German philosopher: 'Most people criticize the cause they espouse.'

As a pioneer of a new formal language I feel obliged to offer you my support in both a 'positive' and a 'relative' aspect, in regard to the attacks against the Bauhaus. Greetings from your fellow worker, Theo van Doesburg

Inscribed in the right upper corner of the letter the motto: 'L'avenir vient du nord.' (The future approaches from the north.) - Fernand léger.

(Doesburg's letter Is at the Bauhaus Archiv, Berlin.)

20. MA, VIII/8, Vienna, 30 August 1922, p. 64.
21. Minutes of the 1 October 1921 meeting of the Bauhaus Masters' Council, Bauhaus Archiv, Berlin, unit no.7/5.
23. Ibid.
31. Ibid., p. 292.
32. Ibid., p. 293.
33. Ibid., p. 294.
34. Walter Gropius, 'The Viability of the Bauhaus Idea', circular addressed to the Bauhaus Masters, 3 February 1922; In Wingler, op. cit., p. 51.
35. Ibid.
36. Ibid., p. 52.
37. Muche, Memorandum to the Masters' Council, 8 February 1922, in answer to Gropius's circular; in Franciscono, op. cit., p. 295.
43. Exhibition of the Work of Journeymen and Apprentices in the Staatliche Bauhaus Weimar, April-May 1922; probably Itten's text on a leaflet; in Wingler, op. cit., p. 54.
44. Cf. Scheidig, op. cit., p. 28.
45. Ibid., p. 29.
46. Miller-Lane, op. cit., pp. 76-7. Miller-Lane believes that Buschmann was influenced by Spengler's Decline of the West.
Chapter 8. New Faces

1 The unfavourable responses to the exhibitions of 1922, and their hostile reception in Weimar, again strained the by now almost peaceful relations between the Bauhaus and the town. The upkeep of the school, because of financial and political considerations, continued to depend on legislative decisions, and there were many who were eager to influence these. Dr Beyer, the legal counsellor and financial director, second in command at the Bauhaus, Carl Schlemmer (Oskar Schlemmer's brother, and craft master of the wall-painting workshop), and Josef Zachmann, the craft master of the cabinet-making shop and Gropius's close associate, began a campaign of rumours and accusations regarding Gropius's private life and the practices of his architectural office. Meanwhile Dr Beyer negotiated with the government about hiring a new bookkeeper, without consulting Gropius. Gropius took the entire affair, including all the charges made against him, to be aired in front of the Bauhaus Masters' Council, inviting all the crafts masters and even Gertrud Grunow to the meeting, where he requested the appointment of an independent committee to investigate the charges. This took place on 5 October 1922; on the evening of 14 October the members of the investigating committee - Kandinsky, Muche, Josef Hartwig and Emil Lange - were able to report that they had found every single one of the charges unfounded. On 20 October, after Carl Schlemmer and Zachmann had taken the whole affair to the Ministry, the events were entered into the record. On 11 December 1922 the meeting of the Masters' Council was able to put an end to the affair: since the charges had proved to be entirely unfounded, Dr Beyer, Carl Schlemmer and Zachmann were asked to leave the Bauhaus immediately.1 Zachmann and Schlemmer withdrew their charges, having admitted their groundlessness, but Dr Beyer, who maintained close contact with nationalist circles in Weimar, was not allowed by these to withdraw his charges.2

2 Gropius wrote in private correspondence: 'This Schlemmer conspiracy was a hateful business. Even Oskar says it was a pathological case, that they have collected every bit of gossip about me over the past year... Of course he is very downcast about the whole affair, at such times he is usually confused and nervous, but I still like him, even though he does not make my life any easier.' Gropius had to decide if he should part with Oskar Schlemmer as well. He even asked a friend in Stuttgart, Lily Hildebrandt, to suggest a replacement; her choice was Willi Baumeister. But Gropius was large-minded enough to think in terms of the whole picture, and did not let his momentary personal sensitivities...
influence his decision. He remained loyal to Schlemmer: 'Just wait and see, once Schlemmer starts to work again, he will leave Baumeister far behind. The latter, in spite of his fine gestures, and no matter how attractive his character, still creates "at second hand".' Gropius had not in the least changed his position since early 1919, when he wrote his letter to Ernst Hardt: the matter of artistic quality was the single most important determinant in the fate of the Bauhaus.

Since the first generation of students was nearing the end of their studies, the time for providing the opportunity of architectural instruction for them was on hand. After a thorough search, and in good part on the basis of Klee and Schreyer's recommendations, in the spring of 1922 Gropius turned to the Breslau architect, Emil Lange:

Dear Mr Lange,

... After the first two and a half years of our existence, we have reached the point at which we can set out in the direction of practical work by training our students and journeymen in architectural practice. Towards this end we intend to establish a large-scale experimental studio where practical workshop problems may be addressed in both the technical and the formal senses, under the direction of a highly qualified practising architect.

Such an experimental studio would stay in contact with the architectural commissions received by the Bauhaus or by myself. We are within reach of the practical possibility of receiving a commission for the construction of a housing project.

The direction of such an experimental studio should be entrusted only to someone with practical experience, who knows contemporary forms and technologies, is technically inventive, and beyond all this, possesses the necessary practical abilities.

This creation of an architectural studio, which he had hoped would lead to the amalgamation of his own office into the Bauhaus, and would have also proved to be of key importance to a possible Bauhaus public exhibition, again turned Gropius's attention towards postponed problems. Lange's finely tuned ear caught the repeated emphasis on the word 'practical', and he wanted to clarify his position and work sphere, before accepting the appointment:

Since our personal discussion I have come to feel that the appointment you offer would claim only a partial use of my creative powers, leading to a one-sided, and for me unpleasant, exploitation of my abilities... from your letter I can see that you draw a distinction between the artist form masters and myself. This makes it clear that in the field of architecture (and I mean architecture in the sense of your Bauhaus programme) you also draw a strict line between formal and practical components. I myself, just like your Bauhaus programme, do not recognize such distinctions.

A possible explanation might be that you believe this separation of functions to be the result of the latest developments, insofar as the kinds of people needed by you are found as two special types. This would mean that you would consider each type unqualified in the area of the other, and with each given task you intend to draw sharp lines of demarcation between them. All of this may have a bearing in the case of the visual artists, who are unsure in practical matters of crafts, while the craftsmen are too rigid.

But in the field of architecture this would lead to an entirely deplorable situation. If you classify me exclusively among the practical builders, I shall make no objections, in the spirit of your Bauhaus. However, insofar as this classification refers to an appraisal of my abilities, unless I am much mistaken, I must insist on a correction. It has never been my ambition to be known as a construction specialist. Nor do I acknowledge a dividing line between the structural and the formal, as no such thing
has ever existed in the great periods of architecture, and there is no such thing in
the deepest sense of architecture. It is impossible for someone to be a fine architect
in the technical sense of the word, without at the same time being talented in the
spirit of architectural form. It is equally inconceivable for me that one can be a
good architect without at least some feeling for structural solutions.
These considerations have determined my development over the course of years. At
the outset, I, too, had wanted to be an architect in the old sense of the word,
motivated by my love of form. However, I soon came to differ with such architects
because of their one-sidedness. Therefore I turned in a purely practical direction, in
order to learn the practical foundations of all types of architecture, and to avoid
bias of any kind. And now you would have me engage in a one-sided activity of the
opposite kind; acceptance of this would mean conflict with the entire curriculum
for me.
If I were to respect this strict dividing line, then, for example, it would be
impossible for me to convey to the students my observations on architectural
construction without being free to refer to the significance of each and every
component of the building from a formal point of view - whereas only by this
means can one arouse the interest of the students, and achieve their understanding
of technical problems. In my opinion, we cannot make such distinctions if we want
to realize the programme of the Bauhaus. I am aware that you have divided the
masters into two groups, form masters and crafts masters. However, I do not think
that a practising architect such as myself can be wholly assigned to one or the other
of these groups.

Gropius received these remarks from the most sensitive quarter: from an architect An
architect, moreover, who most probably did his own drawings.

It was precisely as an architect - the representative of the supreme synthesis of all art -
that Gropius evolved the notion of training the new type of architect/technician who
receives instruction in art and technical expertise from the most authentic sources. It was
precisely in the role of architect that he came to distinguish between these aspects, so
that he could reunite them by means of a new kind of chemical reaction. And now, in the
person of Lange it was an architect, of all people, who protested, and refused to
acknowledge the separability of artistic and technical aspects.

Nonetheless, it was with the utmost confidence that Gropius replied to Lange:
I believe I shall be able to set your mind entirely at rest, and in the following I am
going to employ the same openness that characterized your letter.
In our discussion I said to you that in my opinion, under the present circumstances,
we cannot find individuals who, like the masters of times past, are equally
competent in craft and are powerful artists at the same time. I can hardly name any
exceptions to this. Therefore I based the entire curriculum on a twofold system,
founded on the duality of the form master and the craft master. But the more one
group masters the material of the other, all the better; the cross-influences would
not affect the affiliation of the individual masters with their own group, because
they are judged on an equal footing, and this is reflected by the remuneration as
well.
Returning to your situation: judging on the basis of your personality, and by the few
works of yours that I have seen, my impression is that you are a most experienced
builder, possessing highly developed senses of form and proportion - and this
means a great deal. It would appear, however, that your works do not bring to the
forefront any new formal problems that you solve in your own, recognizable formal
language. Whether this might not change, here in our atmosphere, which is so
permeated by formal concepts, remains to be seen. It would be a fine thing, and the
right thing, in my opinion, if here everyone taught - both technique and form - in
the measure that his accomplishment in the respective area entitles him. Then
everything would regulate itself. No one will be hindered in his unfolding, neither by me nor by anyone else, because out of the work of individuals we intend to create a unity that may be grasped as a whole. I hope you understand this.

For yet another reason I have stressed technical competence in the process of fitting into our system. The experimental area that we are collectively endeavouring to establish aims to extend precisely this collective effort to reach the field of architecture. However, most of the form masters are lacking in the technical skills needed to transplant their formal ideas into the realm of actualization. What the outcome of such endeavours may be, we are unable to tell at this stage. We should be most grateful to accept any and all positive contributions you might make. You, along with me, stand in the centre of the Whole, and the success of our experiment will essentially hinge on our ability to cooperate. On my part, I very much look forward to working together with you.

It is remarkable that Gropius should speak of disparate formal and practical/technical problems regarding architecture, of all fields, when architecture is the very activity that from the outset intends to unite the otherwise separable artistic (formal) and technical spheres. The question offers itself: why didn't he look for an architect who had evolved his own formal language to accompany his own formal methods? Or else, why didn't Gropius himself take in his hands the direction of the planned architectural workshop? Instead, he mechanically carried over the division of art and technique into an area where this division should have ceased to exist - chiefly because the students had by now received their twofold training, and, at the start of their architectural studies, it was high time to realize the synthesis aimed at.

At this time it was Gropius himself who was essentially responsible for separating the spheres of art and technique - the joining of which had originally formed the basis of his entire programme. He did this presumably because he was again obeying the dictates of the situation; he wanted to employ Lange to fill a predefined role, and had no need for another associate who would transgress the limits assigned to him within the structure of the Bauhaus, and thereby lay claim to a more comprehensive intellectual leadership. In this sense, the spirit of Itten continued to haunt the Bauhaus for a long time: Gropius most definitely strove to keep each master within the bounds of his sector in the total task.

That the problem of such a division, or its possibility, had preoccupied the climate of opinion within the Bauhaus around this time is indicated by the fact that, less than a month after Gropius's letter to Lange, the Masters' Council considered the question: 'By what means can the student body be divided into creative talents as opposed to merely gifted craftsmen?' and so make the masters' task easier in the workshops. Although Gropius put off the answer until the next semester - when, as we know, the masters and students would have other matters to keep them busy - the mere emergence of this idea, just like Lange's reasoning, was an indisputable sign that although the distant goal may have been a new synthesis, the present saw only the separation and hermetic isolation of these different aspects. This constituted the practice. The rest, for the time being, remained theory.

Naturally Gropius could by no means accept this kind of categorization of the students: for the ones classified as 'creative talents' would immediately drop all workshop activity and fall victim to the cult of artistic genius; meanwhile the internal value system of the Bauhaus would be skewed by the devaluation of the craft skills acquired in the workshops.
Gropius, who in his heart had by now found his way back to his prewar ideals, faced an almost insoluble tangle of tasks. He wanted to present a truly new quality: a new kind of object created by a new kind of expert designer; he intended to bring this about under his own sovereign aegis as director, as independently as possible from outside forces; and in the interests of his twofold goal he had to maintain a certain facade, the image of an outstanding school, well-known for its faculty of internationally respected artists, without which he could not hope for support. Therefore the facade could not show the slightest sign of a rift; he had to employ the greatest caution and diplomacy regarding Klee and Kandinsky's activities and artistic and pedagogic theories, for, although their intellectual and artistic works were totally irrelevant from the point of view of Gropius's concrete endeavours, they were the supporting pillars of that facade without which not even the thought of a move towards industrial design (to call a spade a spade) could have arisen. At the same time the situation was further complicated by Gropius's most sincere respect for the two artists, and his deep-down conviction that their presence and influence had an undeniable if hard-to-pinpoint effect on the actual level and importance of the Bauhaus's work.

Still, it must have been difficult to counter Kandinsky's declaration in the course of the debate about romantic-individualist versus objective-rationalist work methods: 'Individuality is the harbinger of the future, and the collective is a thing of the past.' This was all the harder to swallow because in saying this, Kandinsky was not assuming Itten's role as Gropius's antipode within the inner power structure of the Bauhaus, but was referring to the catastrophe he had lived through in Russia, and which had come to mean, as early as 1922, 'the loss of a whole generation'. This experience, although no one would have guessed it at the time, lay in store for Germany as well; but in 1922 in avant-garde or progressive circles it would have been sacrilege to place individuality as a value above the collective. What Kandinsky, with his Moscow experiences behind him, meant by the term collective, was, at that time in Weimar, probably understood by no one else but him.

Kandinsky and Gropius, in spite of mutual respect, continued to be separated by a widening rift between their philosophies.

That which Gropius desired to regulate by means of theories, Kandinsky would have left to practice. For instance, when, in connection with the selection of new students for admission, Gropius declared that 'new members of the Bauhaus should be selected on the basis not so much of artistic preparation as of their craft background', Kandinsky objected: 'Admission should hinge on the selection of suitable human beings rather than on the choice of a method.' Aware of how easily theory could degenerate into ideology, Kandinsky always continued to seek flexible solutions in place of theoretically limited methods.

At all events, Kandinsky was one of the most respected personages at the Bauhaus. In his person, a living legend entered the Bauhaus; the mythic dimension surrounding him was greater than that of all the other masters put together. Organizer, founder and leader of the famous Munich group Neue Kunstlervereinigung ('New Association of Artists'), then of the even more famous Der Blaue Reiter; acknowledged as the creator of the first abstract painting; author of the essay so deeply influential for anyone committed to the cause of modern art, 'Concerning the Spiritual in Art' - and, on top of everything, a Russian, who played a leading role in the organization of a modern art institution, INKhUK (Institute of Artistic Culture), in Moscow. He held the rank of seniority at the
Bauhaus - he was 56 years old - yet the students respected him above all perhaps because of his logic, his objectivity, his exact and clear reasoning. 'With Klee, everything remained a bit up in the air; in the end it was up to you to make whatever you could of him. Kandinsky was extremely constructive,' recalls Gunta Stölzl, a student, and later leader of the textile workshop. Herbert Bayer emphasized that 'Kandinsky valued highly the individual gifts and personalities of his students. Although he could be extremely self-assured, he was always courteous ... A perfect gentleman, who never made you conscious of his superiority. His criticism was objective.'

'Kandinsky, when discussing a problem with the students, was intensely attentive, in his own worldly style, smoking a cigarette, and his comments touched on areas that at first glance did not seem to relate to the problem on hand, but would soon prove to be valuable by unfolding the universal implications of the work. His critiques were almost festive experiences, treasure and enlightenment in one.'

Klee's ideas on teaching moved in dimensions even more cosmic than Kandinsky's. In his course 'Dealing with Formal Methods', he emphasized the study of general laws, the unbiased and thorough observation of nature, and the humblest appraisal of one's own position. Klee served as a living example, affecting students more by his own behaviour than through his concisely formulated pedagogical instructions. One of his students, Helene Schmidt-Nonne, writes:

The instruction he offered to those of his students who worked as autonomous painters was providentially divided into two parts: on the one hand, theoretical instruction and, on the other, the analysis and correction of works created in the painting class. Here we had to explain what we had intended to achieve in our work, and what we felt to be the means to realize our aims. Holding a small writing slate in his hand, Klee sketched out in chalk what he thought should have been done to reach the stated aim, and, having discussed the matter with his small audience, wiped the slate clean, leaving it up to the student to draw his or her own conclusions.

Klee avowed that only the methods could be taught; if the same applied to the thematic world, the student would be in immediate danger of being swallowed up by the teacher's personality. Klee tried to avoid this danger by never divulging any information about his own technical methods, and never giving guidance about how to achieve specific effects of one kind or another. All of that we had to find out for ourselves by experimentation. He gave assignments towards this end. For example: 'Try to express the processes of thinning out and condensing: the movements of various degrees of colourlessness on a coloured surface. Colour is absorbed, swallowed up - now colour turns into a death agony, decomposition, twilight, decay - a negative movement. Or else depict the movement of colour values on a colourless surface. The way colour triumphs, reigns enthroned, grows, becomes growth itself..." He periodically changed the themes of his lectures, always adjusting them to new circumstances. In the various courses the assignments sometimes duplicated each other - but the solutions were never rigidly identical. At the conclusion of one of his courses he said: 'This is one possibility -1 myself, by the way, do not resort to it.'

Klee approached the affairs of the Bauhaus with the same unbiased mindset as he did every artistic and intellectual problem - perhaps this too earned him the nickname 'The Good Lord'. He observed everything but said little. He did not judge, nor did he typecast. Felix Klee, his son, describes one of the rare occasions of his speaking up (probably in connection with the Beyer-Zachmann-Carl Schlemmer affair):
There was a meeting of masters and students at the figure-drawing studio of the Weimar Bauhaus. The agenda was the expulsion from the institute of a few crafts masters who turned out to be insufferable fellows. The Director, Walter Gropius, gave an incendiary speech about lawful and unlawful behaviour. Master Johannes Itten gave his interpretation of an Indian legend about a man who, bitten by a poisonous snake, began to run around in circles, to save his life by sweating out the poison. After masters and students were all done with their speeches and counter-speeches, suddenly Paul Klee rose to speak. Everyone grew silent. My father then proceeded, calm and collected, to read in his savoury Swiss German accents the text on the can of pipe tobacco by his side: Brinkmann. Fine cut. 100 grammes. Dutch blend. Price, sixty pfennigs ... There was frantic applause, the ice was broken, the emotions subsided.  

Klee was the purest representative of the creative attitude that insists on the highest measure of self-sufficiency and independent development. This path is the most difficult, and is followed by the fewest students, young or old. Van Doesburg, in directing his attack at Itten, was in essence opposing the pedagogic method, leading to independence and autonomy, that Klee espoused. In fact, Itten and van Doesburg's educational ideas had more in common than Klee's had with theirs; after all, both of them offered ready-made philosophies of life that their students could passively adopt, while Klee refused to do for his students a task that they should have done themselves. This is what Feininger was reflecting on, when vacationing with Kandinsky early in the autumn of 1922: 'We were wondering how many (or rather how few) of the students are really conscious of what they want to achieve and strong enough to follow their course painstakingly. For most of them the unsentimental and perfectly unyielding van Doesburg seems to supply something definite, a dogma, something ready-made to cling to - contrary to our explorational endeavours, which in the long run would lead them much further. Why is there this voluntary submission to the tyranny of a van Doesburg, and this mulish noncompliance with all requests or even suggestions put forth by the Bauhaus?'  

This intellectual question was posed in Germany, in the autumn of the year that saw the assassination of the foreign minister Rathenau in the summer, the triumphant entry of Mussolini in Rome, and the inflation of the value of the dollar from 550 marks in July to 7500 marks in December.  

Therefore Klee, as one of the 'corridor masters' - those masters who rarely, if ever, showed themselves in the workshops - happened to represent precisely the most demanding and highest aspirations of the Bauhaus. In spite of not contributing in a concrete manner to the objects being made in the workshops, he was Inculcating in his students the highest standards of artistic and human autonomy that in effect coincided with what Gropius called the Bauhaus idea, and which was, from the very outset, and as Gropius had always intended, the opposite of every sort of narrow-minded dogmatism, such as that represented by van Doesburg in Weimar.  

But the De Stijl group also had a fertilizing effect on the Bauhaus, although not in the field of ideology. Marcel Breuer, one of the most talented students at the Bauhaus, after his Africa chair of the Expressionist Itten era, designed his famous armchair in 1922 under the influence of De Stijl designer Gerrit Rietveld. The tubular light fixtures of Gropius's office were also inspired by De Stijl. The exclusive use of clear colours and structures of elementary purity had, without a doubt, the effect of a manifesto; and by 1922 the Bauhaus was obviously more receptive to the integration of international Constructivist currents than to the continuation of earlier Expressionist tendencies. This style change,
which had clearly taken place in spite of the fact that at the Bauhaus style was not to be a topic of discussion, brought the objects created at the Bauhaus closer to industrial design, because the international Constructivist trends that they had spontaneously begun to adopt pointed towards the clearest, leanest design lines - that is, the forms most conducive to mechanized mass production. In addition, the aesthetics of Constructivism had certain economic implications: the constructivist object embodied an idea - maximal stylistic and utilitarian value through minimal means, a notion that favoured industrial viewpoints.

Both signalling and accompanying the style change was a 'change in tone', which, as we have pointed out, was characterized by the students' turning away from the esoteric, quasi-religious atmosphere and thought of the Itten circle. At the frequent Bauhaus festivals and evening programmes more and more free improvisations and parodies were presented, humorous and profane manifestations that were out of tune with the Itten circle's hitherto dominant austere Mazdaznan spirituality and lifestyle. Masters and students alike participated in these evenings. Some of the events were 'thematic', such as the Lantern festival or the Kite festival, while other occasions were simply dance parties, which brought about the establishment of the Bauhaus band - according to Hans M. Wingler, 'one of the most original jazz bands in Germany in the Twenties'. Its organizer was a Hungarian Bauhaus student, Andor Weininger, whose main instrument was the piano; the band included Heinrich Koch (bells), Rudolf Paris (drums), Hans Hoffmann (trumpet), and others. As Gropius recalls it, their performances melded 'accordion music and the pounding of chairs, the rhythmic smacking of a table and revolver shots in time with fragments of German, Slavic, Jewish and Hungarian folk songs .. . This dance music soon became known all over Germany and was played at artists' festivals everywhere; but since it could never be successfully transferred to paper, it remained gaily impromptu, even later when the instrumentation was expanded to include two pianos, two saxophones, clarinet, trumpet, trombone, banjos, traps, etc.'

Another famous item of Bauhaus folklore was the Bauhaus dance, which, according to various memoirs, was an elaborate series of rhythmic movements - as some would have it, there was no other dance on earth like it - and which became one of the rites of social life at the Bauhaus. The eyewitness account of Farkas Molnár, who matriculated at the Bauhaus in 1921, is worth quoting at length:

If you are not familiar with the festivals of the Bauhaus, then you don't really know the Bauhaus product. These festivals arise suddenly, on the most varied pretexts. For example, the great winds. Whereupon a gigantic placard is carried all over the community: FESTIVAL OF AERIAL GAMES. Two hundred kites of all sizes, shapes and colours float in the air at the end of thin strings. There is nothing more beautiful than that. Games played by 200 children of all ages... Summer brings many other delights, such as the water games known as bathing. The burghers are especially incensed, for allegedly the Bauhaus folk are fond of forgetting their swimsuits. But this is not true. I passed three summers there without a single occasion when the two sexes bathed together like that. Of course there were occasional exceptions, here and there. Extremely rare. But everyone loved the cold water and the stony beach. And boxing. I challenged Gropius, 'the Grand Seigneur' himself, to three rounds . . . The winters were even more perilous. This is the season when dancing becomes a health requirement... the time when girls bloom ... Of course most of the credit goes to Andor Weininger, who organized the Bauhaus band, Jazz band, accordion, xylophone, saxophone, bombast, revolver. When he sits at the piano he reigns over all the masters; he leads, like Admiral Scheer, he uplifts, gesticulates, conducts, commands. His smile is world-famous ... Here the Individual
dances are not performed in their usual form but as the throbbing pulse of the beat dictates. There are special Bauhaus dances, as well ... The dancing is suddenly interrupted by a resounding crash. All eyes are on the stage. The Bühnenwerkstatt is at work. This merits a whole article in itself. The most strikingfarces, bloody tragedies, persiflages, exotisms. There is something novel here: those spontaneously arising improvisations... Everyone plays a part. One after another they take the stage; much of the time the action is simultaneously in the middle of the hall, up in the galleries and on the podium ... The greatest expenditures of energy, however, go into the costume parties. The essential difference between the fancy-dress balls of the artists of Paris, Berlin, Moscow and the Bauhaus is that here the costumes are truly original. Everyone prepares his or her own. . . . You see monstrously tall shapes stumbling about, colourful mechanical figures that yield not the slightest clue as to where the head is. Sweet girls inside a red cube. Here comes a winch and they are pulled up into the air; lights flash and scents are sprayed. And now for a few intimate details about the bigwigs. Kandinsky prefers to appear decked out as an antenna, Itten as an amorphous monster, Feininger as two right triangles, Moholy-Nagy as a segment pierced by a cross, Gropius as Le Corbusier, Muche as an apostle of Mazdaznan, Klee as the song of the blue tree.

One novel phenomenon, significant from the point of view of the Bauhaus's changing profile, was the light- and colour-movement compositions designed by two students, Kurt Schwerdtfeger (graphic/printing workshop) and Ludwig Hirschfeld-Mack (sculpture workshop), and first displayed at a Bauhaus entertainment in 1922. They were patterned after the animated films drawn directly on celluloid by Viking Eggeling, Hans Richter and Walter Ruttmann, and their play of light in many ways anticipated certain compositions of the later Bauhaus theatre. They consisted of coloured cut-out shapes manipulated behind a screen lit by a spotlight so that a series of dreamlike abstract compositions, 'light paintings', made of moving coloured forms, appeared and dissolved. The colours and shapes, as well as the intensity and focus of the light and colours, were all variable. The contours of the cut-outs grew vague, or multiplied, or else turned into completely sharp outlines.

In this rather primitive light-show (two more years were needed to perfect it), one could already see the motifs that informed the visual art-oriented Bauhaus stage productions and also made up the ideal form-world of Constructivist painting and sculpture. The abstract shapes moved about, and stayed in continuous motion, the series of colour- and form-compositions were constantly changing, and the picture not only moved, but moved out into space, that is, dissolved all static constraints, and became disembodied as well: light endowed these works with a cosmic character. Another animating aspect of this moving colour composition was its being brought into existence by technological means, via the spotlight, and that design was the decisive aspect of its creation. The realization required only a mechanical (at first, manual) manipulation - in other words, involved intellectual work of an engineering nature, codifiable into mechanically mediated instructions. This last detail is one of the most essential elements of the constructivist imagination and its Utopias and, as we shall see, will be a recurrent theme in more than one Bauhaus production. In fact, this vision of 'man at the control panel' will become a central theme; the new man whose sphere of activity has shifted from the physical to the higher, more exclusively intellectual roles of designer and operator.

The new faces and voices were brought to life and to the forefront of activity in the Bauhaus by currents of the changed historical situation, the same currents that removed Johannes Itten from his central position, and not much later, in early 1923, swept Lothar
Schreyer, too, from the Bauhaus scene. The high tide of mystical modes of thought was replaced by the even flow of a more everyday mindset. From here on only a real philosopher could philosophize - namely, Paul Klee. Klee's cosmic view of life and his objective nature studies in no way depended on the ups and downs of intellectual currents influenced by history, and he was without a doubt the most introspective, most radically philosophic painter not only at the Bauhaus but maybe in all of modern art.

To replace Itten and Schreyer in 1923 the Bauhaus, very much a product of contemporary history, needed new masters with new visions, to create the new forms for the changing times.

For Itten's successor in the key position of the Preliminary Course it was especially important to find an open-minded, unbiased form master who was as close as possible to Gropius, and who would create a bridge between the Bauhaus and the Constructivist groups. Gropius turned to his old friend Adolf Behne for advice, and by January 1923 was able to thank him for his help in 'healing the rift created by van Doesburg between us and some other artists'; in the same letter he states that 'I am very glad that you suggested a meeting at your place with Moholy-Nagy and El Lissitzky at the earliest possible occasion.'

This would indicate that it was a choice between these two men that resulted in the invitation of László Moholy-Nagy to take Itten's place in the Preliminary Course. But in spite of all his sympathy for and confidence in Moholy-Nagy, Gropius did not entrust this, perhaps the most important single course at the Bauhaus, into the hands of one man again. From the student body he picked the 35-year-old Josef Albers, who already possessed some teaching experience, and appointed him as the first Jungmeister. Albers would teach the first semester of the Preliminary Course, and Moholy-Nagy the second. (Actually the 'young master' was the older of the two: Moholy-Nagy was 28 when he arrived at the Bauhaus.)

Gropius first encountered Moholy-Nagy's pictures, and then the artist himself, in 1922 at the Sturm gallery in Berlin. It was a case of instant recognition and fellow-feeling: this was the man the Bauhaus needed. Young, free of any academic bias, full of enthusiasm for everything that was new, totally open to new materials and processes, extremely receptive - and last but not least, he worked in the idiom and spirit of Constructivism.

László Moholy-Nagy, born in 1895 in the village of Bacsborsd in southern Hungary, left his native land after the fall of the Hungarian soviet republic. After a stay of a few weeks in Vienna, he arrived with a severe case of influenza in Berlin, where a Quaker couple nursed him back to health. Gradually he found his way back to his work as a painter. Soon he became one of the adherents of the most radical, abstract Constructivism. Meanwhile he helped to gather material for MA ('Today'), the periodical edited by Lajos Kassdk in Vienna; he provided much of the news about European art. Moholy-Nagy's studio became the meeting place of Dadaist and Constructivist artists. He published articles and works in De Stijl, Der Sturm, and in Hungarian-language periodicals in Vienna, Yugoslavia and Romania, as well as in Broom in the United States. His relations with De Stijl were not altogether without hitches; in early 1923 he published his views under the title 'Proclamation' in the Hungarian communist paper Egység ('Unity'), signed together with Ernő Kállai, László Peri and Alfred Kemény. In this, they espoused communist proletkult art and sharply attacked 'the constructive (mechanical) aestheticism of De Stijl.' Around this time Kállai made a similar attack on De Stijl in the pages of MA. On Moholy-Nagy's part, there was no sign of a conflict with De Stijl before this strange
Proclamation, nor did he voice any communist beliefs afterwards. Walter Scheidig believes that Gropius showed unusually keen diplomatic instinct in selecting László Moholy-Nagy from among the Constructivist artists: ‘He cleverly avoided inviting one of the leading figures, van Doesburg or Lissitzky ... he proposed Moholy-Nagy, who had also participated in the Weimar Constructivist Congress.’ That Gropius might have hesitated for a while between Lissitzky and Moholy-Nagy, and that Lissitzky somehow found out about this, or at least would have welcomed Gropius’s invitation, is indicated by several acrimonious letters, full of mud-slinging, written by Lissitzky to his wife after Moholy-Nagy’s appointment to teach at the Bauhaus.

Moholy-Nagy brought to the Bauhaus the fresh air of a young barbarian open to anything that was new. One of his students, Paul Citroen, recalls him this way:

> Like a vigorous, eager dog, Moholy burst into the Bauhaus circle, ferreting out with unfailing scent the still unsolved, still tradition-bound problems in order to attack them. The most conspicuous difference between him and the older teachers was a lack of the typically German dignity and remoteness prevalent among the older ‘Masters’ as all Bauhaus teachers were called. He never asked what impression he made, or whether what he had to suggest would affect anyone’s ego. He knew neither toga nor cothurnus in his relationship with students, and when at first he was often mistaken for a student, he was delighted. - We who had already spent several years at the Bauhaus were often sceptical of so much innovation, aware of intrigues, jealousies, personal advantages; and we certainly never did any work if there was the slightest chance that someone else might get credit for it. Moholy was totally uninfluenced by these fluctuations in our enthusiasm. There never lived anyone more devoted to an objective cause. His high opinion of the importance of the Bauhaus remained unimpaired, and he devoted himself to it with such fervour that we started to discuss his possible collapse. But as a newcomer he got no credit. Many of us used him for our own advantage and burdened him with tasks we ourselves should have solved. But, with the smiling enthusiasm of a child, Moholy accepted all demands, and his vitality seemed unlimited.

Moholy-Nagy’s teaching efforts were characterized by an emphasis on forming the whole man, and not merely some specialist limited to a narrow segment of the field - a ‘segment person’, in his words. He brought a completely new outlook to the Preliminary Course, while essentially following Itten’s methods in the exercises in the study of materials. In unison with Gropius, he based his instruction on an objective and scientific view, with an eye to biology, mathematics and technology. He liked logical systems: whereas Itten had had his students create free-form compositions in montaging diverse textures to develop the sense of touch, Moholy-Nagy took special care to have them arrange the different materials according to a strict system. Thus tables, curves and circles of touch came into existence that illustrated the various materials according to the ‘increments’ of their tactile values along a certain parameter of quality, such as the gradated scale of rough to smooth, or hard to soft. Moholy-Nagy did not allow the actual material to become the subject of the exercise: he would admit only the abstract qualities of ‘roughness’ or ‘softness’ in his curriculum. At the outset of his work at the Bauhaus his teaching activity consisted of, among other things, transposing various abstract properties, by means of long and complicated series of exercises, into qualities that were optically perceivable and comprehensible by the students.

Student projects prepared for Moholy-Nagy’s Preliminary Course differed fundamentally from the work that had been done in Itten’s course, primarily in their reliance on constructivist formal elements and their attempt to achieve objectivity. The aim was not
self-expression, but the amassing of the richest possible scale of optical impressions and perceptions: and this constituted a higher quality.

38 In contrast to Itten, Moholy-Nagy lived in the present every bit as much as Gropius did; a thousand ties connected him to the ever-shifting constellations of the freshest ideas, tendencies and discoveries. The motivation of his artistic work was rooted in his personality, as he had formulated it in his adolescence for his brother: 'I am after something new, that has not been done by anyone' - and this ambition represented a bond shared with Gropius.

39 One of Moholy-Nagy's most characteristic concepts, stemming from his willingness to explore new Ideas, was the series of telephone pictures in 1922. These were small, rectangular enamel-painted compositions he designed, and by specifying the dimensions and positions of individual pictorial elements on a grid, and their exact hue over the telephone, he had them executed at a sign factory. Here Moholy-Nagy anticipated a much later concept and practice, belonging to the age of electronics, insofar as his procedure was based on the idea that a predesigned picture could be translated into an intermediary language - in this case numbers conveyed by telephone - and after transmission could be retranslated back into its pictorial elements in a realized composition. Moholy-Nagy was naturally most interested in the procedure itself - the compositions themselves were modest works containing a minimal number of pictorial components. Among his utopianistic contemporaries he had perhaps the most clear-cut ideas about what direction progress might take. At the same time, among his painter colleagues, he was the least attached to painting itself: he transferred with extraordinary speed the emphasis of his activities from painting to mechanical picture-making procedures.

NOTES

1. The case was dealt with at the Bauhaus Masters' Council meetings of 14, 15, 20, 28 October and 11 December 1922. The minutes are found in unit no. 7/5 of the Bauhaus Archiv, Berlin.
2. Hüter, op. cit., p. 34. Hüter also adds (p. 182) that the case was settled 1405 days later on 13 March 1927, with a ruling in favour of the Bauhaus.
4. Ibid.
6. Minutes of the 16 May 1922 meeting of the Bauhaus Masters' Council; Bauhaus Archiv, Berlin, unit no.7/5.
7. Lange's reply to Gropius, Breslau, 19 June 1922; Bauhaus Archiv, Berlin, unit no. 7/4.
8. Gropius, reply to Lange, 22 June 1922; ibid.
9. Minutes of the 11 July 1922 meeting of the Bauhaus Masters' Council; Bauhaus Archiv, Berlin, unit. no. 7/5.
11. Ibid.
12. Ibid., p. 61.
13. Ibid. Hahn quotes Gunta Stölzl’s manuscript 'Erinnerungen'.
15. Ibid. Hahn quotes from Xanti Schawinsky’s unpublished manuscript, 'Fragment', 1970.
17. Ibid., p.54.
18. Ibid., pp. 54-5.
23. Farkas Molnár, 'Élet a Bauhasban' (Life at the Bauhaus); in Perisztóp, Arad, June/July 1925, pp. 35-7.
28. Emő Kállai, 'Korrektürat: A De Stijl figyelmébe' (Correction Needed: For the Attention of De Stijl); in MA, Vienna. 1 July 1923, pp. 14-16.
I thought that Moholy would be more careful after the remarks by Kemény in Kunstblatt and G [Zeitschrift für elementare Gestaltung, ed. Hans Richter] and would only deal privately with stuff he has filched, but he is getting brazen. Here are the facts for you:
(1) 1921-2. When I went to Berlin and met Hausmann in Moholy's studio, it was decided to publish a periodical. I made out its programme dealing with productive, not reproductive, achievements. At that time Moholy still had no special subject; I drew his attention to photography. He was just preparing his first exhibition for Der Sturm. Neither Hausmann nor I
took him seriously. At our next meeting Hausmann showed us some cuttings from American periodicals about optophonetics. There were two abstract photos among them, to which I drew Moholy's attention. I am not sure whether they were by Man Ray, because his name was not yet known to any of us.

(2) Spring 1922. Dada Conference in Weimar. Tzara tells about the Champs délirieux. Subsequently displayed a few pages in Berlin and Moholy was extremely interested in their style of production and got all possible information out of Tzara.

(3) In the meantime, In 1922-3, he had got to know Loeb, and acquired further knowledge. He went to these people and saw the photos by Man Ray because they were preparing an issue. Moholy did a series of 'abstract photos'!

(4) When the issue was being put together, Moholy suppressed the things by Man Ray (after all he was far away ... in Paris), and he soon got rid of Loeb and Josephson. From Man Ray's photos he selected those which did not too strongly resemble his. Then he spiked the article by Man Ray, and himself cooked up an intellectual hotchpotch of all our slogans. And thus he feigned an achievement. Losovik, who was the translator for Broom and also translated Moholy's writing, told me all this. Neither Loeb nor Josephson, Losovik nor I, thought any more about it: for it is in fact the same thing as saying that Richter discovered the abstract film.

(5) In Das Kunstdet (current year of Issue, first appearing here) Harold Loeb saw an article 'Photographie ohne Apparat', with four Illustrations, where the subject is very lucidly dealt with. So you have the witnesses - Hausmann, Tzara. Losovik, Loeb, Lissitzky - but they are not required at all. One should look at the work itself. Moholy wanted to demonstrate to us that Man Ray is a Dadaist: objects, no representation of light, etc. But Moholy created an abstract light-pattern. The artistic merit of the discovery is something completely created by Man Ray. He reaches the point of perversity in his complete abstraction of light. The underlying theme is both eccentric and American. There you have something of merit, and it has character too, even in its weaknesses, because it is alive.

What has Moholy contributed to it? Light? It has been left in the air. Painting? Moholy doesn't know the first thing about that. Theme? Where is that to be found? In order to concentrate, you've got to have a focal point. Character? That's the mask they always hide behind. It's idiotic of me to be taking this Moholy business so seriously, but this plagiarism is already getting to be too bare-faced.

Another letter by El Lissitzky to Sophie Küppers. 16 October 1924, (Ibid., p. 53): 'By the way, I was told that Moholy is also preparing a book on 1914-24, in which everything before 1920 is treated as mere fertilizer for the Bauhaus, which then accomplishes everything and surpasses all that has gone before. Jolly little Idea, what? Scurrilous, sculduggery!

Chapter 9. If We Intend to Survive

1 On 5 October 1922, Feininger wrote in a letter: 'Two meetings again today and tomorrow. We are forced into a compromise to come out now with the big exhibition we had been planning. We are all reluctant to agree to such art politics... The fact is that we have to show to outsiders how we perform (and what we are able to produce) in order to win over the industrialists. It is a question of do or die for the Bauhaus. We have to steer towards profitable tasks and mass production. That goes decidedly against our grain, and we are aware of forestalling the process of evolution. But we won't consider it a sacrifice if it saves the cause... As time is short for preparations, the workshops will be open from now on in the afternoons. You can imagine how charged the atmosphere is. Gropi appears in a new light. He has a clear perception of these realities; only he is on the side of the purely mechanical approach. Thank God that Kandinsky, Itten and Muche preserve the pedagogic balance very well.'

Walter Scheidig sums up the circumstances of the 1923 Bauhaus exhibition as follows: 'The Thuringian government demanded a progress report from Walter Gropius, in the form of a large exhibition in the summer of 1923. The government acted upon pressure from opposition nationalist and "folk" groups, as well as from local craft guilds. Not the least influential were the "voices from abroad", meaning first of all van Doesburg's Weimar circle. Walter Gropius yielded to the pressure, but if he could have helped it, there would have been no house construction exhibited in the Bauhaus Exhibition of 1923.' Throughout the Bauhaus literature we encounter this same attitude; Karl-Heinz Hüter writes: 'The government pressured the Bauhaus to organize an exhibition in 1922. This is how it intended to justify and cover itself in the face of public opinion.' Others write in a similar vein. However, thus far no document has been discovered containing a request, demand or instruction issued by the government calling for an exhibition; there is, however, a memorandum by Walter Gropius, dated 15 September 1922, entitled 'Proposals for the Planned Bauhaus Exhibition in Weimar, Summer 1923', in which he states: 'The economic situation of the past few months forces us to realize the planned exhibition in a form that, in view of the current fiscal realities, will be limited, but in qualify all the more outstanding.' Three days later, at the 18 September meeting of the Masters' Council, he placed the issue of the exhibition on the agenda without any mention of coercion or demands on the part of the government. According to the
minutes, after the discussion of the fiscal crisis, 'Gropius read the plans for next summer's Bauhaus exhibition.'

It is indeed likely that the government that sponsored the Bauhaus would have preferred to see the school make itself more popular in Thuringia. It is also indisputable that rising inflation must have given Gropius grounds for concern about further postponements of the planned significant and convincing exhibition and the possibility of a complete financial collapse that would prevent its realization. Still, it would appear that there were other primary reasons for scheduling the exhibition for the summer of 1923, for it seems obvious that the date was specified not by the government but by Gropius himself. This is backed up by Gunta Stölzl's memoirs, and is given further support by the parliamentary debate, to be dealt with below, in the course of which Gropius had to persuade parliament to cover at least part of the exhibition's costs - for, if the government had asked for the exhibition to be held in 1923, it is inconceivable that the request would not have been accompanied by at least a symbolic financial contribution.

It is more likely that we must seek the explanation for the timing of the exhibition in the processes and changes that were going on within the Bauhaus.

His conflict with Itten, and the school's inner schism brought about by Itten, were obviously instrumental in compelling Gropius to restore, or create, the inner unity that would make the Bauhaus similar to medieval masons' guilds. Clearly, only communal work, and a collective task, could bring about a true community of spirit; what was more, above and beyond the constructive work, a collective anxiety was needed, a situation that would enforce a fundamental unity.

The task of the exhibition, made nearly superhuman by the additional stake of the school's survival or extinction being pinned on its success, served as a challenge to the entire 'membership' - students and faculty alike - leaving no alternative but total dedication of maximal work capacity on the part of every individual: giving all to the collective, or else leaving the school. The difficulty of the task, enhanced by the shortage of time, provided that extra tension which is an indispensable requirement for a truly collective effort. From the moment work at the Bauhaus began to focus on preparations for the exhibition, all other conflicts became automatically blurred or swept away.

This special state of affairs took effect on 13 October 1922, when the following proclamation was issued in the Bauhaus, bearing the signatures of Muche, Schlemmer, Hartwig, Breuer, Schwerdtfeger and Gropius:

A Call to All Members

The First Bauhaus Exhibition, planned for the summer of 1923, must, first of all, demonstrate the work and goals of the Bauhaus for the broader public, and at the same time serve as an appeal to these circles, as evidence that we do not wish to withdraw in a resigned or arbitrary manner, but instead are willing to take our place in the life of the community by means of creative work, and service.

If we wish to survive, then it is not only a desideratum but a must that we focus all upcoming efforts on this task. From today on a state of emergency will take effect, linking the work of each individual and each workshop to the idea and realization of the exhibition. The committee chosen is authorized to execute this to the exclusion of any and all other considerations or interests.

There was one other circumstance that may have served as a strong personal motivation for Gropius: the annual congress of the Deutscher Werkbund was scheduled to convene in Weimar in the summer of 1923. It is most likely that Gropius wanted to prove something: for all of his colleagues, everyone whose opinion really mattered to Gropius - the ideal,
sympathetic connoisseur audience for a Bauhaus exhibition - would be in Weimar at that time. Ultimately this proved to be a timely coincidence: the communal efforts needed for the collective construction of an experimental building proved to be vitally important in welding the Bauhaus into a true community. But it is highly likely that Gropius would have still carried out the exhibition if the Werkbund congress had been its sole motivation.

The tension was further increased by the arduous struggle to squeeze a modicum of financial assistance out of parliament. Gropius had to fight an uphill battle, for Dr Herfurth, who in the meantime had become a representative of the right-wing Deutschnationale Volkspartei, had introduced a bill in parliament for the cessation of financial support to the Bauhaus. During the March 1923 parliamentary session - that is, well after Gropius had decided about the date of the scheduled exhibition - there was sharp debate over the fate of the Bauhaus. Max Greil, the Minister of Education and a member of the Social Democratic Party, responded to the proposed bill by assuring Dr Herfurth that the greatest economies would be observed in connection with the Bauhaus, and that attention would be paid to developing the school's contacts with Industry. On the other hand, he was adamant in stating that the government had no business making decisions in matters of art, and considered it a positive fact that the most advanced art institute in Germany was operating here in Weimar, attracting students who would be welcome anywhere in the world. 'We must give the Bauhaus a chance at the earliest opportunity to fully demonstrate all of its creative abilities."

After this, Gropius spoke, referring to the need for transferring emphasis from handicrafts to industry, but also pointing out the difficulty of the Bauhaus's participation in the everyday life of Thuringia without commissions and orders from local industry. He went on to describe how the Bauhaus had been compelled to start its own vegetable garden on its own plot of land, to provide food for its kitchen during these difficult inflationary times. They had planned to build dwelling units on this land. One of these houses would be built as an experimental model for the exhibition, and to this end the Bauhaus requested funds from parliament. This request was followed by a lively, essentially political debate, in the course of which the representatives tried to decide whether the Bauhaus was a centre for communist activities, and whether the state had a right to interfere in artistic issues. A typical expression of one point of view was offered by Dr Neumann, the Jena representative of the Deutsche Volkspartei, who said:

'We have nothing but sympathy for a talented person such as Mr Gropius, the accomplished scion of a well-known artistic family in Berlin. But we are aware that thus far his primary strength has been theory ... However, for us in parliament, practice is more important, and the question is: can he transplant his theories into the field of practice to make them concrete in these times that are so difficult from a financial and a productive viewpoint? ... I would like to know how well-founded such expectations can be ... As I recall, the government of Thuringia ... had legislated a paragraph in connection with the Bauhaus that contained the proviso that further aid would be pending upon the school proving itself productive by 1925.

Dr Krüger, representing the DDP (Deutsche Demokratische Partei), reminded Dr Herfurth that his assault was extremely ill-timed; that he should have waited until evidence of Bauhaus work could be viewed, such as an exhibition. 'Only after that can the state, as the supporter of the Bauhaus, draw its conclusions."

Tenner, the representative of the KPD (Communist Party), combined his defence of the Bauhaus with a condemnation of the
rightists. After this, Dr Herfurth spoke, reasserting his anti-Bauhaus stance, and
recommended a reconsideration of the allotment of funds towards an exhibition that
would in turn help to decide whether the Bauhaus merited further financial support. He
also pointed out that Gropius, who was now championing industrial contacts instead of
handicrafts, had based his programme at the outset precisely on handicrafts. He ended by
rejecting the attacks of the Communist representative, stating that the political right was
perfectly objective and unbiased. Gropius had the final word, expressing his regret that
the cause of the Bauhaus had to be, from the outset, entangled in politics, and that the
party proposing the current bill felt compelled to launch one attack after another against
the school.

In the end the Social Democratic majority, together with the Communists and Democrats,
voted the continued funding of the Bauhaus, including aid for the exhibition, and
expressed hopes, in the words of the Social Democratic representative Brill, that the
Bauhaus 'during the period of transition will fertilize our industrial production and
construction industry with new cultural ideas and thereby raise them to a new cultural
level'.

However, 1923 was the year of runaway inflation, so that Gropius had to look for other
sources of money. At the beginning of the year, one dollar was 7,525 marks; in April, it
went up to 20,975; in July, to 160,400; in October 142 million (I) marks, and in November,
one dollar equalled an unpronounceable, 12-figure amount in marks. In the end, Gropius
received the funds for the experimental building from Adolf Sommerfeld (who later had
to sell the house at a loss). In addition, smaller contributions came from several
manufacturers.

The preparations for the exhibition indeed gave direction to all activities at the Bauhaus.
Gropius ended up hiring Emil Lange to fill Dr Beyer's position as business manager/legal
adviser, for he could not offer a teaching position: the experimental architectural studio
remained unrealized, and the construction project would have to materialize as part of
the exhibition. The task of autonomously raising an 'experimental house' designed at the
Bauhaus, and equipped and furnished in its entirety by objects made at the Bauhaus,
constituted an immediate and symbolic goal for every student and master at the school.
At the same time it defined the nature of ongoing activities as the design of usable,
utilitarian objects. The role of art, specifically of painting, became questionable. In
connection with the exhibition only mural painting assignments came into consideration:
there were plans for the mural decoration of the main staircase of the Bauhaus and of the
Jena Town Theatre. However, these plans were only partially realized.
4. Kröll op. cit., p. 63: 'in the crisis precipitated by the interpellations of those conservative Thuringian representatives who forced the government to demand a public exhibition by the Bauhaus'.

Kröll does not cite any facts or data that would support this claim. His assertion is inaccurate, for the Thuringian assembly was in session during March 1923, whereas Gropius had decided about and announced the exhibition as early as the fan of 1922.

Isaacs, op. cit., p. 296: 'In the late autumn of 1922, at the increased urging of municipal and state authorities, the masters and students of the Bauhaus began work on preparing an exhibition.'

Isaacs, who fully and accurately documents each of his statements, does not mention a single concrete instance of this 'urging'.

Whifford, op. cit., p. 138: 'The Thuringian government demanded evidence of the school's progress, however, and Gropius was in no position to refuse.' Whifford, too, fails to document this statement.

In the exhibition catalogue Bauhaus 1919-1928, edited (and possibly written) by Gropius himself in collaboration with his wife and Herbert Bayer (see chapter 8, note 22), we And the following on p. 80: 'In 1923 the Thuringian Legislative Assembly (Landtag) asked for a Bauhaus exhibition - which would serve as a report on what had been accomplished in four years. (This was contrary to the intentions of the Director, who would have preferred to postpone a public display until more mature results had been obtained.)'

If this is correct - although the excerpts from the Assembly minutes published by Hüter and Wingler show no mention of any concrete pressure or demand; on the contrary, the Assembly balked at voting the funds requested by Gropius for the already announced exhibition - then what are we to make of the fact that Gropius had issued the Appeal for the exhibition in October 1922 in the Bauhaus?

Most likely this is an Instance of the birth of an unfounded legend to which, as the above quote shows, Gropius himself had contributed. The statement was plausible enough for other authors to adopt without verification. Helene Schmidt-Nonne, Joost Schmidt's wife, writes in a similar vein in her article 'Westibülreliefs für die Bauhaus-Ausstellung Weimar 1923' (in Joost Schmidt. Lehre und Arbeit am Bauhaus 1919-1932, Editions Marzona, Düsseldorf, 1984, p. 15):

'Barely three years after the founding of the Bauhaus, in the middle of 1922 Walter Gropius was forced to present the work of the institution in the form of an exhibition, and give a public account of the results achieved.'

She gives no evidence or documents as to who forced Gropius and how.

It is probable that Gunta Stölzl states the case accurately when she writes (manuscript of a lecture given for Deutschlandsfunk, 5 February 1969; In Gunta Stölzl - Weberei am Bauhaus und aus eigener Werkstatt, Bauhaus Archiv, Berlin, 1987, p. 105):

'Gropius's decision (Emphasis added.) that we should risk an exhibition in the summer of 1923, took shape; we worked feverishly, literally day and night.'

It should be noted that Wingler himself, the first to publish the Bauhaus documents, writes as follows with regard to the birth of the 1923 exhibition (Wingler, op. cit., p. 6):

'The big, central event of the Weimar Bauhaus was the 1923 Exhibition coupled with a Bauhaus Week, which the Council of Masters decided to hold in spite of some reservations.' (Emphasis added.)


6. 'Protokoll der Besprechung des Meisterrates am 18 September 1922': In Hüter, op. cit., p. 233.

7. Gunta Stölzl; see this chapter, note 4.

8. 'Aufruf an alle Bauhäusler!'. 13 October 1922; in Hüter, op. cit., pp. 235-6. In the appeal itself there is no mention of any external pressure, demand, ultimatum or instruction.


10. 'Landtag von Thüringen. Stenographischer Bericht'; in Hüter, op. cit., p. 244.

11. Ibid., p. 248.
12. Ibid., p. 249
13. Ibid., p. 252.
15. Ibid., p. 247.
18. The correspondence of Gropius and Lange; Bauhaus Archiv, Berlin, unit no. 7/4. The date of Lange’s contract is 1 January 1923; although several minutes list him as working as the Bauhaus’s legal counsellor and financial director.
Chapter 10. The New Unity

1. THE EXHIBITION that took place between 15 August and 30 September 1923 (although the Bauhaus postcards printed for the occasion stated the date as July-September) signalled a new epoch, and not only in the history of the Bauhaus. It indicated quite accurately how far and in what direction Germany had moved away from the conditions of 1919, and what the eventual outcome of the basic Bauhaus idea might be. Schlemmer wrote in his diary of June 1923: 'The Bauhaus represented the first serious attempt at merging craftsmanship and academic work ... so, too, the Bauhaus was intended to be shaped not by a dictatorial administrative system with insignificant "subdivisions", but rather by a multiplicity of minds and interests. Four years of the Bauhaus constitutes a chapter in art history. But also in the history of the times, for the Bauhaus mirrors the fragmentation of the German people and of the period.'

2. For this very reason it is worthwhile to pause at this point to see what the various monographs on the Bauhaus have to say about this turning-point at the school: the replacement of the crafts programme by the technological approach: that is, the programme in design.

Giulio Carlo Argan saw this transformation as conforming to a certain law: 'When craft training switches over from tools to the use of machines, the process of training recapitulates the evolutionary process of transformation from handicraft to industry; the art school is therefore society in a nutshell, since the pedagogical process repeats that of social evolution.' For this reason he labels the first period of the Bauhaus - ending in 1923 - the folk period, since the handicraft objects made at this time 'were direct expressions of a folk ethos, or else were searching for experiences that could lay the foundation for a tradition; but we must admit that this ethos did not find a formal outlet, it did not succeed in surpassing folk art in originality and naivety.' Although this last statement of Argan's may be applicable only to the ceramics workshop, and in part to the early output of the weaving workshop, he touches upon an essential feature of the initial period of the Bauhaus: i.e., craftsmanship is not merely style and technique, but an approach as well, a worldview embraced by the traditional folk artist, and craft methods cannot create anything contrary to the craft worldview, or transcending it. The pitchers and other artifacts produced at the Domburg ceramics workshop attest the truth of this.

3. The sociologist Friedhelm Kröll, examining the history of the Bauhaus from the viewpoint of group dynamics, describes 1923 as the moment of consolidation. According to him, this process began with 'the appointment of Kandinsky, whose personal aura counterbalanced
Itten's, and ... ended with the appointment of László Moholy-Nagy as Itten's successor. Kräll believes these appointments 'consolidated the system of loyalties, and appeared as guarantees against the future appearance of subcultural rifts whose dynamics could endanger, from within, the stability of the Bauhaus.' Kröll also asserts that from 1923 on 'the painters are relegated to the peripheries, away from the central nucleus of the institution', and emphasizes the community's reluctance to accept László Moholy-Nagy. The latter not only had a hard time with the German language, but, in addition, 'the thrust of his interests, his art which conveyed the newest technological experiments and possibilities, as well as his remarks regarding the termination of the bourgeois class system all combined to assign him the role of "scapegoat". His difficulties with the German language made his assimilation more problematic, and exposed him to the ironic comments of masters and students alike. By way of contrast, Kandinsky fulfilled the informal requirements: he was a close friend of Klee's and other masters; he had prestige as a "revolutionary" of painting, he maintained reservations about industrial society, and was characterized by a hyperindividualistic confidence and conviction to the point of apoliticalness. Kröll conveys a fine sense of this 'second public' within the Bauhaus to which we find occasional allusions in Feininger's letters as well: a certain sphere, mainly the circle of painters, where Gropius's programme of industrial aesthetics was viewed with reservations and a not always publicly voiced criticism. In spite of Gropius's theories about the integration of art into the creative social process, by 1923 the painters within the microcosm of the Bauhaus found themselves essentially in that same outer periphery that they occupied in society proper - and faced the same kind of mixed reception: unconditional respect and acknowledgment of their artistic qualities and achievements, intermingled with doubt as to the necessity of these same qualities and achievements. As we shall see, these same attitudes would solidify into concrete demands that threatened to break into the open before the opening of the exhibition.

4 The sociologist Herbert Hubner, analysing the history of the Bauhaus primarily as a social Utopia, refers to 1923 as a turning-point because this was the moment when the utopia formulated in the Manifesto should - or could? - have been realized. With technology becoming an increasingly significant factor at the Bauhaus after 1922, according to his analysis a process that he labels ideology had set in, induced by the fact that technology: in the long run, cannot be reconciled with the notion of a Gesamtkunstwerk. Yet at the Bauhaus not only the idea of a synthesis, but its actual realization was at stake. As long as art and crafts were the only approved categories at the Bauhaus, the Gesamtkunstwerk could remain as an ideal... But when it became time for realization, technology asserted itself as the ruling motive. Functional analysis and problems of optimal applicability were on the new agenda. This inevitably had to lead to the displacement of the Gesamtkunstwerk as the focal point of thought... since it had nothing to do with functionality, not to mention applicability ... In spite of continued reiterations of the intention to realize the Gesamtkunstwerk, technological production and its repercussions became much more important than the idea of artistic synthesis. The high-minded passion of the founding period became overlaid and eventually obliterated by technology. This shift in equilibrium occurred precisely at the moment when the Bauhaus launched the experiment of realizing its utopia.

5 This moment was the occasion of the 1923 exhibition. In a later chapter Hubner returns to this theme: 'Again the theoretical incompatibility of idea and reality was demonstrated. As long as they were looking for the methods, there was no chance to
realize the idea. By the time the methods were found, the idea of a collective work of art had become superannuated.  

But let us consider the events themselves. The exhibition itself involved a slew of work projects. There were preparations in the workshops and classrooms of the Bauhaus for a show of works by masters and students representing every workshop and every phase of training. In the main building of the Bauhaus an international architectural exhibition was being installed, to introduce the works of new Russian and Czech architects, as well as those of the Bauhaus rivals, the De Stijl group and Le Corbusier. At the Weimar Landesmuseum, a modern art exhibition was planned, consisting of paintings and sculptures by Bauhaus faculty and students. The most important project, the creation that would summarize the Bauhaus spirit and the objects made at the school, would be the model house - named 'Haus am Horn' after the street it stood on - erected on the lot owned by the Bauhaus, and equipped and furnished exclusively by products of the school's workshops.

Gropius had intended the exhibition not only as a progress report but also as a product display, offering to the manufacturers both the actual Bauhaus products as well as the design capabilities they embodied. He had hoped to accomplish the liberation of the Bauhaus from its economic dependence on the Thuringian authorities, and its successful integration into German society as a whole. Earlier, he had not succeeded in his attempt to place the Bauhaus under the jurisdiction of the national government, and thus escape the penny-pinching and suffocating local control. Now, he planned to achieve this end via the economic sphere, by using the school's own resources, instead of appealing to the authorities, to slip out of the stranglehold of Thuringian budgetary appropriations. Had he succeeded by these means in solidifying the school's social and economic position, he could indeed have attained the intellectual independence needed for the unhindered continuation of projects that brought no immediate profit, such as the activities of the theatre or mural workshops, both of which strove for new interpretations of the ideal of the *Gesamtkunstwerk*.

Gropius himself had to confront an extraordinary trial of strength. For him, something even more profound than the survival of the Bauhaus was at stake: the realization of his earliest dreams. Back in 1919, as Director of the Arbeitsrat, he had written: 'We must have faith in our own strength, we must persevere, until the day arrives when, with full momentum, and perfect preparedness, we can step in front of the public.' At the 26 October 1920 meeting of the Masters' Council, these were Gropius's closing words: 'The most important thing for the Bauhaus is to amass a series of finished, high-quality works that will make it possible to, one day, appear before the public with these works as the results of its labours.' (Emphasis added.) And we find the same motif in his June 1919 address, when he recommended that the students of the Bauhaus withhold their work from public view for some time to come and advised them to consider themselves members of a secret conspiracy that would in the end 'crystallize in a great, integral work of art', and surprise the public with it.

It would seem that for a long time Gropius had nourished a strong desire to create a community, a guild that would work intensively, hidden from the world's eye, engaged on a new kind of *magnum opus*, which, upon being revealed, would achieve an extraordinary effect: something new that would leap forth out of mysterious obscurity, fully fledged, for the world's eyes to see. If such an expectation appears somewhat childish, it only goes to show that we are dealing with a deep-seated longing, towards the realization of which
Gropius was willing to mobilize all of his energy. This moment, on which Gropius seemed to have staked everything, was the exhibition scheduled for the summer of 1923, the event that would 'introduce' the Bauhaus to the world.

The 'public' that would pass judgment on Gropius's work included all progressive German intellectuals, the International art and architectural community, an International forum consisting of Constructivist groups, representatives of architecture and design from all over the world. The 'public' also meant, naturally, the authorities, bureaucrats, politicians and rivals within the immediate and wider neighbourhood of the Bauhaus environment. It was for this public that the Bauhaus had to demonstrate the unity of spirit, work ethic and worldview, the community and collective way of thought that it did not in fact possess.

And if a certain limited sort of unity did come about, it was created by the exhibition itself, as an opus to be accomplished, and by those ideas that were crystallized and formulated as slogans by Gropius himself in the course of the work.

When Gropius decided that the Bauhaus had to organize this demonstration of its abilities, he was indeed acting in part under the influence of external pressure - for, even if he had not received specific demands, the menacing behaviour of the Bauhaus's opponents exerted indubitable pressure towards 'clarification' of the school's situation. Yet with hindsight it would seem that the more significant purpose of the exhibition was to clarify the school's aims and programme, which needed redefinition for the Bauhaus members themselves. For the first time they stood facing a concrete, collective task, and the solution was a process that would formulate concrete answers to personal affairs as well as to questions related to the new profile of the Bauhaus.

That the Bauhaus lacked any communal ideal that could be publicized by the exhibition, and that practically in no respect was there unanimity within the school, is attested in every detail by Emil Lange’s *Progress Report*, dated 9 December 1922 - that is, almost two months after the initial appeal for the exhibition. Lange was able to see the situation with the fresh eyes of a newcomer:

I was able to observe that whenever the leadership orders or suggests something that requires the collective efforts of the workshops and the leadership, there is immediate and powerful opposition that is to be overcome only at the cost of the greatest efforts and inner shock, This resistance originates in the particular intellectual environment of the Bauhaus.

(1) When the leadership issued the directive for the presentation of the preparations and ideas for the exhibition by each workshop, the response consisted of lengthy philosophical ruminations about the need for this or that. This in fact constituted the refusal to exhibit for a variety of reasons which, being the haphazard counter-actions of certain individuals, it would make no sense to detail here. The results were the paralysis of the leadership and a total lack of cooperation.

(2) The construction of the house.

The slogan was: let us start the work, with all our might. The leadership introduced a plan that visualized all details, and expressed a request for all possible speed, lest we run out of time. The response: refusals - counter-proposals - new concepts, that were not ripe, due to the shortage of time; but no decision as to a practical course of action. A lengthy, arduous tussle with individual opinions that shook the entire Bauhaus most profoundly and most dangerously. If the Bauhaus intended to realize a collective plan, acting in unison, and had purposefully asserted this collective will for the past two years, then certain decrees of the leadership should have been acted upon with far greater determination and discipline. Any other attitude leads
to insurmountable difficulties. As long as there is no change, effective action, given today's extremely difficult economic conditions, remains impossible. Therefore the exhibition will not be realizable in the form that would ensure survival for the Bauhaus. At the present moment I feel certain that particular individuals (both students and faculty) are not in the least aware of the tremendous importance of the exhibition from the point of view of our institutional survival. The struggles of the Bauhaus in the course of the past several months, the behaviour of the higher authorities, up to the level of the ministries, are all irrefutable proof that the powers upon which our existence depends are capable of stifling the Bauhaus, and are ready at present to deny all aid to the Bauhaus in the near future. They will regard the postponement of the productive results promised for years as proof positive that the Bauhaus has no right to exist. ... Right now we have no other recourse to prove our right to exist and to avoid collapse than a powerfully effective exhibition organized at the earliest possible date.

The fact that there was no unity at the Bauhaus did not mean a state of anarchy, but merely the existence of a most definitely perceptible split that had been deepening from the beginning along the highly visible lines of demarcation between artistically and technically oriented activities. It was not only the painters who banded into an informal separate community within the Bauhaus. In the course of the work on the exhibition the makers of objects created another camp of increasing solidarity. Their works, timidly at first, began to evince a common viewpoint, and their self-awareness as artisans and designers grew in proportion to the amount of work accomplished, and the amount of encouragement received from Gropius. This faction solidified and began to oppose the artists' faction. In early June 1923, during the home stretch of exhibition efforts, Oskar Schlemmer wrote in a letter: 'In strict confidence: the students (the familiar battle array) are 'only' waiting for the exhibition before they go to Gropius. They want to get rid of the "decorative" masters, the billboards, the publicity names, sometimes called the "corridor masters" because at most one meets them in the Bauhaus corridors, never in the workshops; they want the money thus freed to be used to improve their own lot (which is certainly often very bad). Although Gropius never dismissed anyone from the Bauhaus for being an artist, the creation of the new slogan was evidently motivated by the need to reunite a Bauhaus split into two camps; it was an attempt at restructuring a community polarized from within, while at the same time readjusting to altered external realities. It was this situation that gave rise to the slogan that, at the same time, chimed in with Gropius's earlier ideas, developed in the 1910s, and also pointed Gropius back towards his earlier self and ideas: 'Art and technology: a new unity'.

'Exactly what we didn't want,' said Feininger to Gerhard Marcks, when he glimpsed the slogan on a poster at the Weimar train station.

At last the exhibition preparations were in full swing. After Itten's departure Georg Muche invested all of his energies into this work - in Gropius's spirit, and representing Gropius's interests now. In spite of being a painter, he was the designer of the experimental house which - instead of a cathedral - the Bauhaus erected as its symbol. In his memoirs, Muche writes:

Gropius, too, had to make a sacrifice. He did not get to build the house which, as architect and founder, he would have liked to build as a symbol of his theories and as the centrepiece of the exhibition. [This was the plan mentioned by Lange.] He did not get to build it because the staid, sober designs and drawings of his architectural office left the youth of the Bauhaus unconvinced. He shut himself off from their comments. He did not listen to Itten, nor to Klee or Kandinsky. This stirred up one
of the youngest Bauhaus masters [Muche is referring to himself] into speaking up about something that he had no competence in. He described the ways and means of building the house, its ground-plan, dimensions, articulation, spatial organisation, the arrangement of its rooms, kitchen, and basement, so that it would serve as a beautiful, comfortable and rational dwelling for five young people. He had felt a longing for a new way of life and his students became enthused by the idea of building this, and only this, house and furnishing it with objects designed and made in their workshops. This was the happy moment when the imagination triumphed over Inertia. In the intoxication of enthusiasm - amidst the doubts expressed by architects and the faculty in charge of workshops - they demanded all or nothing for this thing of their own making, and thus it happened that they elected this Bauhaus master as head of the exhibition committee, and would not settle for less. The strings that Gropius held in his hands snapped the instant when neither side agreed to budge. In the end it was Gropius who relented, saying, 'Your momentum, even if it is madness, is the spirit of our exhibition. I am ready and with you. [Ich bin bereit und mache mit.]

Gropius helped out as if it had been his own project.

Apart from the theatre productions, there were two other collective work projects at the exhibition that strove to realize the ideal of the Gesamtkunstwerk within the framework of existing possibilities. Oskar Schlemmer planned to provide murals and relief for the vestibule of the main Bauhaus building, and intended to involve his students in the project. However, the Academy of Fine Arts, which functioned in the same building, did not consent to this proposal, and therefore the new reliefs - works by Oskar Schlemmer and Joost Schmidt - were executed in the basement corridors of the workshop building. In addition, the four-metre-high walls of the staircase and its niches also came alive with Schlemmer's frescoes. Schlemmer made a definite effort to interpret the architectural spaces by means of his frescoes and reliefs; he intended to demonstrate that art could still also be representative, and that painting, sculpture and architecture were capable of forming an organic whole - even when the murals and reliefs were added as an afterthought in an already finished building, in this case van de Velde's design. It belongs to the history of these works that the subsequent master of the building, the Nazi Party member Paul Schultze-Naumburg, had these frescoes and reliefs destroyed in 1930, commenting, in his letter informing Schlemmer, that he could not understand how the painter dared to consider these primitive exercises to be works of lasting value.

The 1923 version of the Gesamtkunstwerk was the Haus am Horn, the first collaborative Bauhaus building since the Sommerfeld House - 'instead of cathedrals: the "Living-machine"' as Schlemmer had foreseen it. Muche and the students were aided in its design by Adolf Meyer. It was a square-shaped, flat-roofed, white building with the novel feature that its living room, in the centre of the house, received its light from high clerestory windows above the roof level. The sleeping and service areas were clustered around the living room, with their windows facing the garden and street; the living room itself was entirely interior, without immediate contact with the outside (other than the high windows). These highly placed windows were a new element that provided a novel, uniform illumination coming from three directions above, and a better utilization of the walls. Also innovative was the concept of a home that emphasized a turning Inward, a retirement from the outside world, to the extent that the street or the garden were not even visible from the living room. The furniture and fixtures, designed and executed by Marcel Breuer, Benlta Otte, Alma Buscher, Ernst Gebhardt, Theodor Bogler, Erich Dieckmann, László Moholy-Nagy and others, conveyed the outlook, if not yet the aesthetics, of functionalism. They were characterized by simplicity, rationalism, practical
solutions, low cost and an elegance stemming from simple and playful design, although
Breuer's tables and chairs, as well as the other Bauhaus prototype objects, were
eventually to become even simpler and wittier. The house, even as a first attempt,
succeeded as a harmonious whole; it embodied the dream of a new, wholesome and
liberated lifestyle, and stood for young people's ideas about an easy and simple way of life
freed of the ballasts of the past. It was the sign of an important new stage that certain
items (such as kitchen utensils) were only executed as prototypes for which
manufacturers were found. This constituted a first step towards industrial contacts.

19 This spectacular transformation of the Gesamtkunstwerk from neo-Gothic cathedral into a
flat-roofed, functional, one-family dwelling tells the significant story of the turnabout
taking place both in the period and the Bauhaus.

20 Let us take an imaginary step beyond the horizon suggested by the shimmering image of
the 1919 work of integral art. The cathedral on the cover of the 1919 Manifesto was the
symbol of the unity and ascent of the arts - ultimately, of society - the crowning glory of
the spiritual uplift and concomitant cultural transfiguration of the whole nation. If,
however, the skies were to turn overcast, and no light were to strike the ideal image of
this cathedral to illusionistically dissolve its hard contours and scatter its likeness into
crystalline forms - in other words, if the mists of expressionist exaltation and gothic
grandeur were to lift - then we would be left with the fact of a dense structure towering
over people: the compact embodiment of a closed society. Its order is hierarchical; all
activities contained in it are subservient to architecture; its forms and articulations are
bound. This image is the archetypal creation of a totalitarian dictatorship, in the way that
the building of Lomonosov University in Moscow is; an exclusively valid representation, a
'great structure' that is the monolithic symbol of society - a speciality of megalomaniac
empires. As such, it had to disappear, of necessity, from the programme of an institution
based on the ideal of democracy, such as the Bauhaus was.

21 Of course its disappearance was spontaneous and gradual, far from being a consequence
of considerations such as the above. As Schlemmer wrote at the time of the first
preparations for the exhibition: 'The idea of the cathedral has for the time being receded
into the background and with it certain definite ideas of an artistic nature. Today we
must think at best in terms of a house, perhaps even only think so, but in any case in
terms of a house of the simplest kind.' Nor did Schlemmer find the new alternative much
more attractive:

Reason and science, 'man's greatest powers', are the regents, and the engineer is
the sedate executor of unlimited possibilities. Mathematics, structure and
mechanization are the elements, and power and money are the dictators of these
modern phenomena of steel, concrete, glass and electricity. Velocity of rigid
matter, dematerialization of matter, organization of inorganic matter, all these
produce the miracle of abstraction. Based on the laws of nature, these are the
achievements of mind in the conquest of nature, based on the power of capital, the
work of man against man. The speed and supertension of commercialism make
expediency and utility the measure of all effectiveness, and calculation seizes the
transcendent world: art becomes a logarithm. It, long bereft of its name, lives a life
after death, in the monument of the cube and in the coloured square. Religion is the
precise process of thinking, and God is dead. Man, self-conscious and perfect being,
surpassed in accuracy by every puppet, awaits results from the chemist's retort
until the formula for 'spirit' is found as well.

22 Not only because of his temperament, but also as a result of his position in the Bauhaus,
Schlemmer was bound to be more of a freethinker than Gropius. 'No links with either the
masters or the opposition, the Constructivists’ guild—a oeuvre demonstrates the multitude of directions he attempted in order to find answers to the questions posed by the Bauhaus, which were at the same time his own personal concerns. Schlemmer was too much of a sovereign artist to let himself identify with Gropius’s new programme of industrial design and with the new historical era it expressed; and so he could not profess fellowship with Moholy-Nagy and the ‘Constructivists’ guild’. However, he was too realistic and too committed to the Bauhaus, and too little susceptible to aristocratic attitudinizing, to enlist in the camp of the ‘Masters’—that is, of the artists. ‘We avoid carving in wood at the Bauhaus not, as Master Hartwig suggests, because it did not occur to us, but because our conscience forbids us to do that. The woodturner’s shop and not the woodcarving workshop would be today’s corresponding shop to be affiliated with the cabinet-making workshop. A piece of furniture today should be a work of art in its entire structure and not a skeleton to which a little art has been added ... The trouble is that big commissions are lacking.’ (Emphasis added.) Schlemmer could very well see that in the interrelations of society the role of the artist was defined by practical conditions, and that, lacking a social function, the dilemma of art and technology was a foregone conclusion—within the Bauhaus as well.

Gropius judged Itten’s significance within the Bauhaus most accurately when he wrote that both of them were needed: he and Itten formed a dynamic whole, stimulating each other and the entire school, through the ever-present conflict of polar opposites. But with the departure of Itten, no matter how necessary it may have been, Gropius, and to a certain extent the entire Bauhaus, was left deprived; Klee, Kandinsky and Feininger were capable at the most of passive resistance only. They did their own thing, ensuring the constant presence of technology’s polar opposite at the Bauhaus, but they were lacking in Itten’s ambition and personal impetus, which equalled Gropius’s: they had no intentions to take over the Bauhaus. The fact is, however, that their presence did create a certain polarization and tension, thereby sparing the Bauhaus—at least during Gropius’s tenure—from the dead-end of fatal simplifications.

Thus the new unity, the slogan joining art and technology, which was meant to create a political unity within the Bauhaus, because of its philosophical absurdity had the effect of deepening the existing rift. The activity of the Bauhaus moved in the direction of applied design, left the ‘liberal arts’ behind, their representatives in every sense of the word untouched. The slogan had the opposite effect: instead of the unification of art and technology. It called attention to their essential differences. The Bauhaus programme of 1919 had still provided for the work of art that resulted from those ‘rare moments of inspiration’, but Gropius’s 1923 programmatic text, ‘The Theory and Organization of the Bauhaus’, would have it otherwise: ‘The fundamental pedagogic mistake of the academy arose from its preoccupation with the idea of the individual genius and its discounting the value of commendable achievement on a less exalted level.’ (Emphasis added.) In this text Gropius makes no mention of individual achievement, other than in connection with the point of view of ‘unity’: ‘The guiding principle of the Bauhaus was therefore the idea of creating a new unity through the welding together of many "arts" and movements: a unity having its basis in Man himself and significant only as a living organism.’ Actual life means the practice of production and its reality; individual achievements therefore only count as factors in the collective results. And this is indeed logical; as Argan writes: ‘If art is no longer the creation of a single inspired individual, but the consummation of an activity that has its beginning and end in the physical world, and takes place entirely within the
collective sphere, then the problem of its shaping is at the same time a problem of production, and naturally acquires a social aspect.\textsuperscript{24} The change in outlook, which Gropius set forth in his 1923 text and in his lecture at the opening of the Bauhaus exhibition, consisted in the Bauhaus from here on emphasizing exclusively works realizable in the collective sphere, and its considering creative work increasingly as a mere synonym for production.

25 We must not forget that the slogan 'Art and technology - a new unity' was at the same time a political manoeuvre, the ingenious result of Gropius's efforts at diplomacy. He devised it so that the bureaucrats and officials who had a say in the Bauhaus's future would read in it a flexible willingness to change, and could use it as a point of reference in the decision that would give the institution another chance. Likewise, it extended an offer of services to manufacturers; but within the school, and vis-à-vis the German art world, by stressing the word art, it maintained an image of openness and commitment towards the arts.

26 Gropius, obeying the imperatives of the situation, made a power decision in an attempt to settle a philosophical dilemma. Because of strategic and tactical considerations, he attempted to unite two such essentially divergent entities as art and technology. An object that is the product of industrial technology and the creative work it embodies may indeed be of high quality, witty, aesthetically pleasing and ingenious - but the whole process of design and execution takes place in a sphere that has no points of contact with those creative works that are the products of autonomous, subjective, sensual and indivisible powers of expression. This was put into words by Muche later, in 1926 (the issue was never removed from the agenda): 'Art and technology are not a new unity; regarding their creative values there is a significant difference between them. The limits of technology are set by reality, while art can only reach the level of true values if it aims at an ideal goal ... The artistic formal element is a foreign body in an industrial product. On the other hand, technical limitations turn art into a superfluous thing, whereas only art can provide a view of the magnitude of illimitable creativity beyond the bounds of thought.'\textsuperscript{25}

27 The circle of artists at the Bauhaus did not identify with the new programme, and their increasing isolation, the uncertainty of their position within the Bauhaus from here on, always presented an insoluble problem, which would necessarily take a dramatic turn under the tenure of Hannes Meyer.

28 The Bauhaus exhibition's most brilliant series of events took place during the 'Bauhaus Week', culminating in a series of performances, theatrical productions, concerts and light shows. The events were attended by such notables as the composers Igor Stravinsky, Ferruccio Busoni, and Ernst Kleneck. Kandinsky gave a lecture on 'Synthetic Art', J.J.P. Oud, architect of the De Stijl group, spoke on 'New Architecture in Holland', and Gropius gave a public lecture on his new programme for the Bauhaus, 'Art and Technology: a New Unity'.

29 In the end, the exhibition - partly as a result of Gropius's publicity campaign, which was nothing short of fantastic - stirred up a remarkably large, appropriately controversial, and, judging by the reviews in important periodicals by the critics that mattered, fundamentally positive response. Lengthy appreciations were published by Dr Adolf Behne in \textit{Die Weltbühne}, Max Osborn in \textit{Vossische Zeitung} and Siegfried Giedion in the Zürich paper \textit{Das Werk}, to mention only a few of the high-quality writings among the hundreds\textsuperscript{26} Predictably, the local press reacted in a hostile manner and renewed Its
attacks on the Bauhaus, in the role of guardians of German culture at large.\textsuperscript{27} Members of De Stijl wrote brief, moderately approving notices.\textsuperscript{28} Disapproval from the 'left' wing of the Constructivists came from the pen of the leading figure of the Czech avant-garde, Karel Telge, in the periodical \textit{Stavba}; although not as stringent as Vilmos Huszár in 1922, he pilloried the Bauhaus for essentially the same reasons: its inconsistent, anachronistic programme and its petit-bourgeois tendencies.\textsuperscript{29} Here we must note that the new programme of the Bauhaus justified van Doesburg, who, throughout his stay in Weimar, had opposed the Bauhaus's orientation towards expressionism and handicrafts at the expense of understanding machines and industrial viewpoints.

The theatrical productions presented at the Jena Municipal Theatre, the exhibitions, concerts\textsuperscript{30} and performances captivated their audiences: Gropius indeed succeeded in placing Weimar in the international spotlight. Reaching over the heads of the hostile local public, he presented the Bauhaus as the new cultural sensation for the intellectuals of Germany and all of Europe. According to the estimate of the municipal authorities, for the 'Bauhaus Week' alone, several thousand visitors arrived in Weimar, and hundreds of people attended the exhibition daily.\textsuperscript{31} Gropius and his visiting friends and acquaintances considered the possibility of founding an international association of artists and architects - an old pet project of his. Among those recommending such an association were Peter Behrens, Bruno Taut, Max Taut, Hans Richter, Naum Gabo, Erich Mendelsohn, El Lissitzky, and Hermann Muthesius. The concept stemmed from the teaching of the Bauhaus, and aimed at acquainting younger generations with the foundations of the new art and architecture, along the lines of shared ideas and methods. The discussions at Weimar did not lead to any concrete results. However, Gropius did not give up the idea, and five years later at La Sarraz, Switzerland, CIAM (Congrès Internationaux d'Architecture Moderne) was founded as an international forum of modern architects. It was to function for more than thirty years, and the Weimar discussions played a role in its programme.\textsuperscript{32}

The internal problems and contradictions of the Bauhaus notwithstanding, Gropius was able to reap the well-deserved harvest of his labours. To its astonished public the Bauhaus could offer a new spirit, a mature programme, and the seeds of a new sense of form.

NOTES

4. Ibid., p. 72.
5. Ibid., p. 137.
7. Ibid., p. 100.
9. Minutes of the 26 October 1920 meeting of the Bauhaus Masters’ Council, Bauhaus Archiv, Berlin, unit no. 7/5.
18. Schlemmer, 'On the Situation of the Workshops for Wood and Stone Sculpture' (letter to the Council of Masters, 22 November 1922); In Wmgler, op. cit., p. 60.
21. See this chapter, note 18.
23. Ibid., p. 23.
27. Miller-Lane, op. cit., p. 77.
29. Teige’s criticism is quoted by W. Gropius, Ise Gropius, H. Bayer (eds), op. cit., p. 91; and Kröll, op. cit., p. 135.
30. See Scheidig, op. cit., p. 35.
32. Isaacs, op. cit., pp. 301 and 470.
Chapter 11. Man at the Control Panel

1 THE IDEAL of the Gesamtkunstwerk, the Integral work of art, had, in the form of the Haus am Horn, moulded itself to the realities of the situation. However, the functional single-family dwelling of 1923 could not be expected to engage the totality of those energies directed towards the realization of a universally valid, collective work of art of an as yet unknowable type. It was the Bauhaus theatre that offered an outlet for these strivings. In 1922 Lothar Schreyer, together with the last dying breath of expressionisms had been expelled by general consent: the dress rehearsal of Moonplay was enough to turn off the audience from ever wanting to see the play again at the Bauhaus. Everyone shared the feeling expressed by Farkas Molnár, writing on 14 June 1923: 'We have reached the point where, on the seemingly modern stages of Germany, amidst a deluge of expressionist eccentricities we have lost track of expressing the actual facts of life: the scene, the visible space, the true stage. The reign of optics and acoustics has been replaced by empty decorations, forced symbols and the loony screeching of expressionist poets.'

2 With unanimous approval, Oskar Schlemmer replaced Schreyer as director of the theatre workshop. He had experience, having directed the dance play Triadic Ballet, performed in Stuttgart, and was a dancer himself. Ever since his arrival at the Bauhaus, Schlemmer had participated in the theatre workshop - 'that leaves me the dance and the comic element' as he wrote in 1922. He had also written that the stage could become at least the symbolic realization of those plans that could not be carried out in reality. 'I noticed one thing, which became especially clear from the perspective of the Bauhaus: much of modern art nowadays tends towards practical application, towards architecture. The economic crisis may make building impossible for years to come. There are no noble tasks to which the Utopian fantasies of the moderns might be applied. The illusory world of the theatre offers an outlet for these fantasies. We must be content with surrogates, create out of wood and cardboard what we cannot build in stone and steel.'

3 This is not a substitute for architecture, but the microcosmic generation and maquette-like realization of processes and movements that are analogues of events conceived in social dimensions. Schlemmer, who began work on Triadic Ballet in 1921, had the same seizmographic sensitivity towards the determinative impulses of the era as did Emő Kállai, the Hungarian art critic living in Berlin at the time. Schlemmer's stage
productions, just as Kdllai’s writings, leave no doubt that the inexorable factor of the age, capable of producing anxiety and hope, was none other than the machine. Both men concluded that art could not avoid the problematics of the machine’s presence and growing influence. International Constructivism shared this same wavelength, and Kdllai’s writings from 1922 to 1923 give a precise account of the movement’s shifts. Moreover, mechanization came to the forefront of public interest for those layers of society not involved with the arts. Frank Whitford calls attention to the fact that Ford’s company was demonstrating that some aspects of Utopia can become reality. His production-line automobiles realized the dream of large numbers of people to have freedom of movement at low cost, and at the same time improved the pay and living standards of the men who worked for him. According to Whitford, this capitalist Utopia had replaced in the minds of many Germans the vague socialist Utopia where the machine was man’s enemy. But this was not the case: Kdllai’s articles, as well as the writings of Russian authors, reveal that the socialist-communist Utopias awaited with a messianic fervour the redemption of the world and man’s total liberation by machines and technological progress. Again I refer to the already quoted short story by Slonimsky, who describes a projected mural painting:

Finally the last panel: the Promised Land … everywhere, in every worksphere, the machine has replaced man, so that all the energies spent on physical labour today can be turned towards intellectual pursuits. The new civilization does not arise out of human sweat and blood, does not stifle anyone, does not commit rape against anyone, everyone is free to enjoy it, and therefore there is an extraordinary flowering of culture. Man has invented whole series of new, magnificent machines. He is able to control the weather, climate, turning the desert and tundra into rich farmlands. Starvation, poverty, exposure to freezing weather are unknown by the new man. The liberated intellect with the help of machines triumphs over time; typhoons and earthquakes are no longer a threat.

4 In Germany every shade of these Utopias was represented, and, fifteen years after the founding of the Werkbund, with the proclamation of the ‘new unity’ of art and technology, the Bauhaus declared the machine to be the most significant factor of the age. And so the theatre of the Bauhaus, sheltered by a technological programme, was able to present the ideas it shared with the vision of contemporary Constructivism.

5 The tone of these performances resembled neither Slonimsky’s exultation nor the Ford autobiography’s production-optimism. Compared with these two, the performances strove, in a markedly European and colourful manner, full of humour, self-irony and anxiety, to bring to a common denominator, on the one hand, organic human form and movement, and, on the other, geometric forms, mechanical rhythms and half-human, half-mechanical shapes. The Bauhaus productions of 1923-4, as opposed to the later, purely mechanical variety shows, were philosophical and multi-layered: as yet, the forms moving about on stage were not exclusively geometric, but rather human or anthropomorphic figures; and the actor disguised as a geometric form, or else the two-dimensional geometric form endowed with humanoid characteristics, had succeeded in creating an idiosyncratic tension of its own. Schlemmer left his powerful personal Imprint on this stage; a central issue of his paintings and theatrical work was the possibility of ennobling the human figure into a spiritual-mathematical formation, while having it remain recognizably human. In his paintings and sculptures the process of formal reduction leads to a degree of spiritual generalization and enlargement of meaning that results in the wave-form of the human figure, stylized beyond the vase shape, ending up as the mathematical symbol of infinity, the horizontal figure eight (
Mythic Figure, 1923). At the same time Schlemmer, perhaps with the exception of this picture, did not create abstract works in painting, sculpture or the stage: he was particularly interested in the borderline, that fringe where the bodily and the spiritual, the human and non-human laws are perceptible both separately and together. In his stage works all this is augmented by a goodly portion of humour; many of his figures invoke the spirit of clowning and farce, and he himself loved to dance these parts (such as the Turk in Triadic Ballet).

6 Schlemmer's first Bauhaus production was The Figurai Cabinet in 1922, a parade of wooden and papier-mâché figures moved mechanically from behind the scenes. These were designed by him and executed by his brother Carl. They were colourful, cartoon-like flat figures, including an enlarged, man-sized profile, a seated lady, a blown-up half face, a rooster - all in Schlemmer's characteristic style of condensed forms and details simplified into bold shapes, in this instance playfully relaxed. These figures moved laterally on a twenty-metre-long assembly line driven by a flywheel from one side; but some of the figures could be moved or rotated in several directions. The Figural Cabinet was the first treatment of the 'Human - or artificial figure' theme, halfway between dance and the marionette theatre, insofar as the painted flat figures were closer to paintings propelled into mechanical motion than to natural human movement or the stylized movement of puppets, yet still referred to both with their anthropomorphic appearance, caricature-like stylization and their abrupt 'gestures'.

7 Schlemmer, in his own special 'loner' manner, related to one of the central ideas of the Constructivist Utopia, the cosmic notion of overcoming all constraints (which culminated in Vladimir Tatlin's 'glider-construction').

**The endeavour to free man from his physical bondage and to heighten his freedom of movement beyond his native potential resulted in substituting for the organism the mechanical human figure: the automaton and the marionette ...** The English stage reformer Gordon Craig demands: 'The actor must go, and in his place comes the inanimate figure - the Ubermarionette, we may call him.' And the Russian Bryusov demands that we 'replace actors with mechanized dolls, into each of which a phonograph shall be built'... possibilities are extraordinary in the light of today's technological advances: precision machinery, scientific apparatus of glass and metal, the prosthetic limbs developed by surgery, the fantastic costumes of the deep-sea diver and the modern soldier, and so forth ... Consequently, potentialities of constructive configuration are extraordinary on the metaphysical side as well.

8 Schlemmer goes on to list at length the possibilities for the modern mechanized stage, and then, before his reader takes him for a technological fanatic, he suddenly reveals that he sees all this from another perspective. 'Utopia? It is indeed astonishing how little has been accomplished so far in this direction. This materialistic and practical age has in fact lost the genuine feeling for play and for the miraculous. Utilitarianism has gone a long way in killing it.'

9 Unlike Gropius, Schlemmer not only refuses to join the concepts of technology and utilitarianism, but calls attention to the fact that technology could indeed mean unlimited freedom if it did not go together with the rationalism that accompanies it. Schlemmer points out that although in the Bauhaus workshops the use of technology inevitably goes hand in hand with the assertion of economic rationales - higher production, lower expenses - on stage, in the world of the imagination, this is not obligatory; 'play and wonder' would deserve to enjoy the benefits of technology. Thus Schlemmer reverses the doctrine of 'art and technology: a new unity': while Gropius
would have the artist merge into the design process, Schlemmer wants technology to serve artistic freedom.

The opening event of the Bauhaus Week, and one of its overwhelming successes, was the performance of Schlemmer's magnum opus for the theatre, *Triadic Ballet*, with accompanying music written for the occasion by Paul Hindemith. This performance gave a precise image of the Bauhaus in 1923 regarding the proportions of human craftwork and technological ideology. *Triadic Ballet* places the number three, in its system-forming and mythic character, as the axis of the composition, hinting at new relationship models beyond individualism and the pair relationship that is one of the fundamentals of Western culture. Three dancers - two men and a woman - perform twelve dances in eighteen different costumes, bringing to life eighteen different characters. The piece is made up of three series; the first is a merry burlesque against a lemon-yellow backdrop; the second, ceremonious and solemn on a rose-coloured stage, and the third a 'mythical fantasy' against a black background. The stiff costumes, some of them mounted on wood or metal, are often stuffed shapes that make the dancers' figures resemble spheres, cones, cylinders and other geometric forms. Schlemmer derived the dance steps and movements on stage from the costumes: the spectacle itself was the determinant, and the movement had to arise from it, rather than from the person hiding behind the costumes.

Unique costumes and masks, the products of craftsmanship, appear on the stage, but their generalized forms, which involve geometric laws in the dance on stage, have an alienating effect. At the same time the figures are stylized only to the extent where they still retain their anthropomorphic characters - the head, trunk, arms, legs of each figure remain and move separately - but their real human nature is hidden behind the mask-like costumes. Although the tendency is towards the geometrization and transfiguration of the human form, the aim is not total abstraction. It is as if Schlemmer - beyond the aesthetics and expressive power of dance -was most interested in how much formal generalisation, enlargement or reduction into geometric form the human body can take while still retaining its own character, flexibility and mobility.

On the Bauhaus stage there appeared plot motifs, gestures, but never pure action or plot itself. It was a stage, and not a theatre: Bauhausbühne, and not Bauhaushéater - a
performance that originated in the problematics of visual art, and it would be mistaken to judge it by theatrical standards, to approach it through theatrical concepts. The other theatrical pieces performed during Bauhaus Week were intended to reformulate the magical and moving experience offered by Schwerdoffeger and Hirschfeld-Mack's reflected light show of the previous year: the capability, by means of the mastery of certain technical methods, to bring into motion the forms created by human imagination, thereby, as it were, giving life to these creatures of the Imagination. Constructivist art had for almost a decade been attempting to break away from the wall, via the genre of spatial constructs, reliefs and corner reliefs. Therefore the Bauhaus stage's form plays, freely moving in space, understandably created a sensation and a feeling of revolutionary innovation. The light show appeared as a still more innovative medium containing even richer potential, and as such, Hirschfeld-Mack's Coloured Light Play was seen as a fitting finale to the Bauhaus Week.

Schlemmer's students, Kurt Schmidt, Georg Teltscher and others, penetrated yet further into the realm of theatrical abstraction, but at the same time progressed in the direction of simplification, by moving past the border region of the delicate equilibrium between stylized anthropomorphic figures and geometric abstraction, the fertile and rich creative field that was Schlemmer's. This was the logical next move, the step compelled by progress, and as such, deeply characteristic of the trajectory of the Bauhaus and the age. Kurt Schmidt writes:

Mechanical Ballet presented constructive forms in dance-like movement. The emphasis was not on accentuating forms derived from the human body; on the contrary, the human body had to recede into the background so that the colourful, varied play of pure forms might take full effect. Coloured forms, adjusted to movement, were attached to the bodies of dancers clad in black tights, the stage walls were black, so that the human body, insofar as it was possible, disappeared...

In Oskar Schlemmer's Figural Cabinet, too, various flat figures were moved in front of a black backdrop. In Mechanical Ballet, the 'costumed' human figure appeared not as an actor, but as the conveyor of abstract forms. The movements of these forms borne by the dancers were dominated by staccato, pumping rhythms, similar to the motion of machines... Had machines been moving these forms, there could have been an endlessly changing series of variable tableaux, but even like this, with humans manipulating the compositional elements, there was a wide open field for the formation of various new configurations.

Schmidt's thinking places value on the precision and regularity of the machine, as compared to the more rudimentary and primitive human; this idea will recur in Moholy-Nagy's writings, and constitutes the next stage in the increasingly anti-individualist ideological trajectory of the Bauhaus. In Mechanical Ballet, as opposed to Schlemmer's works, the human presence is not the organic polarity that generates a fertile tension, but a regrettable necessity, a transitory crudeness, for, after all, the abstract pictorial elements would follow the choreography more smoothly and more precisely if they were moved by well-oiled machines. All efforts were focused on the closest approximation of machine-like effects. 'The choreography was developed so that the juxtapositions, alignments and shifts would create ever new formal and colouristic compositions. We planned and attuned the movements so that the stage should offer a pictorial "event" similar to a sequence of abstract paintings.' In 1924 Kurt Schmidt presented an even more complex dance play, Man at the Control Panel, based on Schlemmer's suggestions, but designed independently. The roughly half-hour pantomime was performed by five men moving as two-dimensional or cylindrical geometric figures in front of a black
backdrop. According to Schawinsky these figures 'referred to switches, tensions, speed, control-apparatuses, reducing people to machine parts', while Schmidt summarized the action this way: 'The protagonist is a demon, in whom the mechanical-intellectual forces of the personality intensify into a demonic robot-existence. At the centre of intellect, at the control panel, the demon releases symbols that loom in front of us in expressive, dreamlike dances. Finally the demon, raging out of control, transgresses the laws of statics and collapses.' This description would suggest that Schmidt, seeking a solution to the problem of man's role in the world of technology, pointed at the 'centre of intellect', the emblematic control panel, as the answer. Similar in spirit, but different in composition, was Xanti Schawinsky's 1924 stage production, Circus, in which the monster of technology is held in check by the Tamer, a half-male, half-female figure wearing a top hat, anticipating, according to Eric Michaud, Fritz Lang's film Metropolis (1926), in which the machine monster daily consumes its quota of humans.

Schlemmer envisioned the possibility of an absolute visual stage offering 'form and colour in motion', and which would be 'kaleidoscopic play, at once infinitely variable and strictly organized'. This, too, would be a celebration of technology, the analogue of a universe 'set in motion' by man, and Schlemmer, agreeing with Kurt Schmidt, designated the human role to be not personal participation in the physical act of dance, but intellectual direction: 'Man, the animated being, would be banned from view in this mechanistic organism. He would stand as the "perfect engineer" at the central switchboard, from where he would direct this feast for the eyes.' Where Schlemmer detects a transitional vacuum, his young students intuit the dawn of a new era; what Schlemmer sees as a space to be cleared for a possible future civilisation - the empty stage - the younger generation populates with their teeming works which they consider to possess universal applicability. The profundity and multi-layered nature of Schlemmer's thinking failed to become public property, just like the manifold dimensions of Klee's teachings, and he was aware of this: 'In this time of crumbling religion, which kills the sublime, and of a decaying society, which is able to enjoy only a play that is drastically erotic or artistically outré, all profound artistic tendencies take on the character of exclusiveness or of sectarianism.'

NOTES

2. Molnár, 'A mechanikus szinpad' (The Mechanical Stage); in MA. VIII/9-10, Vienna, 1 July 1923.
5. Whitford, op. cit., p. 142.
8. Schlemmer, 'Man and Art Figure'; in A. S. Wensinger (transl.). The Theater of the Bauhaus, Wesleyan University Press, Middletown, Conn., 1961, p. 28.
9. Ibid., p. 29.
11. Ibid. Only a computerized performance of these mechanical stage works can be perfect - or, as we had the chance to see it performed’m Kassel in 1986 on the occasion of the exhibition 'Wechselwirkungen - Hungarian artists in the Weimar Republic', when a group at Kassel University reconstructed by means of computers Andor Weininger’s 'Blaugrau bleibt blaugrau'.
16. Schlemmer, 'Man and Art Figure'; In Wensinger (transl.), op. cit., p. 22.
17. Ibid.
18. Ibid., p.31.
Chapter 12. The Part Versus the Whole

1. THE PROCESSES that took place in the Bauhaus after 1923 became increasingly crystallized around the ideal of the 'perfect technician'. It is obvious that by this time the meanings of the words individuum and collective - at least in their everyday usage - had altered in a way closely related to the new worldview and value system emerging at the Bauhaus. In 1918-19 the word individuum referred to bourgeois narrow-mindedness and egotism, against which the artist/intellectual, striving for social-cultural rebirth, set up the ideal of a utopian collective, albeit this Ideal was interpreted in various ways by various groups. As we have seen, the Bauhaus ideal at the outset was a creative community based on the internal egalitarianism of shared tasks, in temporary sequestration from the rest of society - an experimental workshop that would transform itself into a workable prototype before rejoining the rest of society. This Utopian goal was in part invalidated by the changed times, and in part by the fact that the Bauhaus had not evolved into an architectural community or workshop of builders. Another factor was the person of Johannes Itten and his value system, which played a decisive role in the Bauhaus of 1920-21, placing the expressive power and wealth of the personality at the fountainhead of creative work. Thus, increased value came to be placed on individual performance at the Bauhaus, in opposition to the spirit of the founding Manifesto. The consequent internal imbalances endangered the very survival of the school.

2. This was demonstrated at the exhibition mounted in the summer of 1922, when the Weimar public approved of the works shown by the reinstated Academy of Fine Arts, while rejecting the Bauhaus works. The Bauhaus was unable to change this situation; it never succeeded in winning over the local community. The works exhibited by the academicians were of course individualistic creations, the products of the very philosophy that Gropius had labelled 'the academy's cult of genius'. But it was this aesthetic that the Weimar public identified with, accepting it as representative of the community at large; while this same public failed to recognize an image of itself in the works of the Bauhaus artists, and rejected any notion of identifying with them. So the Bauhaus could not hope for any contact with the community via its painters. On the contrary, if it intended to survive, such contact had to be sought in a more neutral sphere, by way of handcrafted objects that would presumably refrain from provoking...
Weimar sensibilities. Therefore it makes sense that the chief event of the 1923 exhibition was the Haus am Horn, and the show of paintings and sculptures at the Landesmuseum took the lowest rank in the order of events. The new values evolving at the Bauhaus, proclaimed by Gropius on the occasion of the exhibition, held personal expression to be less significant than objects produced by collective efforts, objects of immediate utility. In this way the Bauhaus, willy-nilly, had already adopted the values of a society from which it had originally intended to be markedly set apart, so that the Bauhaus no longer maintained any essential separateness from society, other than differences of style and pedagogical approach. The neutralization of art within the Bauhaus, the emphatically greater value placed on design- and production-oriented work, and the acceptance of profit as motivation, all combined to make the Bauhaus conform to the scale of values prevalent in society at large. The school could not remain independent - not even intellectually - of a society on which it depended for moral and material support for its very existence.

And yet this same society still expelled the Bauhaus, as a consequence of transformations that manifested as historical and political events. These would form a dark backdrop to the veritable cascade of liberated Ideas that poured forth during this fertile, creative period at the Bauhaus.

The survival of the Bauhaus in Weimar was vouchsafed by a Social Democratic government that acted as a powerful counterbalance to the passions stirred up by various right-wing and nationalist groups. As long as the Social Democrats were in power, every investigation of anti-Bauhaus complaints concluded without impeachment of the school, and all proposals for cutting off funding were answered by a counter-proposal. However, in 1923 there began a chain of political events that eventually resulted in the ouster of the Social Democratic government of Thuringia.

Germany had defaulted in its payment of reparations, while France emphatically demanded the payments that were due. Since Germany was not making any cash payments - although, as the French pointed out, it had significant cash resources abroad - and delivered only a small fraction of the reparations in goods, on 11 January 1923, French and Belgian troops occupied the Ruhr region, in order to obtain at least the metallurgical brown coal mined there. The Germans responded with outrage and passive resistance, as well as acts of sabotage. German patriotic feelings surged over into the most extreme forms of nationalism; to make matters worse, the military occupation claimed its death toll, creating martyrs. Money rapidly lost its value - France charged that the inflation was fostered by artificial means, since the strength of the German economy could not have allowed such devaluation of the currency. The number of unemployed rose to over a million and a half, and provincial politics shifted to the extreme right or left. In Bavaria, extreme right-wing and nationalist passions peaked during Hitler's 'beer-hall' putsch in Munich on 8-9 November, while in Saxony and Thuringia the lawful elections held at the end of 1922 brought Communists into the governments along with the Socialists. This was unprecedented; Stalin announced that 'if events take a favourable turn, it is easily imaginable that the centre of gravity of the world revolutionary movement would shift from Soviet Russia to Germany.' The government of the Reich did not wish to wait until this prediction came true, and the Bavarian military units were ordered to take up positions along the Saxon and Thuringian border zones, ready to attack at a moment's notice. Finally, on 21 October 1923, units of the Reichswehr occupied both territories. Armed workers offered resistance, but in the ensuing conflict the
superior forces of the Reichswehr easily triumphed. However, there was a political catch to the situation: the army of the Reich was deployed against the legally elected local state governments. In this connection, the central government had to clarify its stand. Finally President Ebert resolved the crisis by 'referring to Paragraph 48 of the constitution, which empowers the president in especially critical situations to declare a state of emergency and thereby suspend a portion of democratic civil rights. The army was authorized to displace the legally elected governments of Thuringia and Saxony. There could hardly have been a more apt illustration of the paradoxical situation of the Weimar Republic: the first occasion when the president of the democratic republic resorted to the declaration of a state of emergency was the displacement of the constitutionally elected Social Democratic and Communist governments.¹

The deployment of the Reichswehr troops signalled a shift to the right in Thuringia. The new elections, held in early 1924, gave a large majority of votes to the coalition of right-wing parties known as the Ordnungsbund. The Bauhaus and Gropius's private apartment were subjected to searches, as suspected 'hotbeds of communism'. Gropius, in his letter to General Hasse, protested against these outrageous and offensive actions, which cast the onus of politics on the Bauhaus, damaging its reputation in front of both the students and the public at large.¹ When a coalition of the DVP and the DNVP (German People's Party and German National People's Party) formed a new government, the general opinion was that the Bauhaus would be summarily expelled from Weimar; this was the solution urged by Emil Herfurth, who had in the meantime become a Privy Councillor. But the government took care, at this early stage, not to become an accomplice of nationalist representatives, who had, in any case, long-term designs. Not wishing to form an alliance with these extreme elements, the government sought the support of moderate Socialists and cautious Democrats, who in turn supported the Bauhaus.³ However, this vacillation on the part of the government vis-à-vis the Bauhaus only fuelled the fires of the Bauhaus's enemies, who renewed their campaign against the school. One characteristic document of this effort was the so-called 'Yellow Brochure', putatively authored by the Weimar locksmith Arno Müller. But Gropius knew that the real authors were Hans Beyer, Josef Zachmann and Carl Schlemmer,¹ who also borrowed from Vilmos Huszár's article in De Stijl. Gropius appealed to the international public, but the stream of letters and declarations of solidarity from home and abroad remained ineffective, as were the efforts of the 'Friends of the Bauhaus', who included Marc Chagall, Peter Behrens, Albert Einstein, Gerhart Hauptmann, Arnold Schönberg, Franz Werfel, Igor Stravinsky, Hans Poelzig, Oskar Kokoschka, Josef Hoffmann and Adolf Sommerfeld. Piet Mondrian and Theo van Doesburg wrote letters expressing their concern for the fate of the Bauhaus.⁷

Gropius's extraordinary public relations efforts and the mobilization of a considerable number of significant personages on the European intellectual scene could not alter the fact that the Bauhaus had become so entangled in the cogwheels of party politics that the decisions made about it were reliable indicators of the balance of power. The right-wing parliamentary majority whittled the Bauhaus budget down to one half and agreed to extend the masters' contracts only for six months. Under these circumstances work and planning for the future became impossible. On 26 December 1924, three days after the parliamentary decision, Walter Gropius, Lyonel Feininger, Wassily Kandinsky, Paul Klee, Gerhard Marcks, Adolf Meyer, László Moholy-Nagy, Georg Muche and Oskar Schlemmer announced in an open letter the closing of the Bauhaus in Weimar, effective as of 1 April 1925. Gropius's last, belated life-saving idea was to convert the Bauhaus workshops into a
production company that would sell its products, or their designs, to industry, enabling the school to earn its way. This logical and realistic idea was bound to lead to an upswing, in a German economy that was being re-invigorated by American capital introduced through the Dawes Plan. The state would have had to subsidize only the costs of the school building and the salaries of the small faculty. But a number of masters protested against this plan, saying that the Bauhaus was primarily an educational establishment, and as a production company it would not be able to fulfill this function. And indeed, what would have been the fate of the non-productive workshops? What would have become of Schlemmer's stage workshop, Kandinsky's mural workshop, Klee's glass-painting workshop? Even if the rest of the workshops had been able to support these, their fate at the Bauhaus would have been sealed. As the prevailing mood before the 1923 exhibition amply demonstrated, there were many - and especially among the members of the 'productive' workshops - who would much rather have laid claim to the artists' salaries, much less offer to support them. It is quite another question whether, given a new situation, and the survival of the Bauhaus in its entirety, a more favourable financial picture could have eradicated these internal conflicts of interest.

Actually the 1923 exhibition realized the hopes it had engendered: the Bauhaus received industrial orders, and these could have generated sufficient revenues to redeem its financial and intellectual independence. However, inflation swept away these funds. If, as some historians would have it, this inflation was indeed the result of a political manoeuvre, a 'false bankruptcy' created to decrease the value of payable reparations, then at this point in the Bauhaus's history we have an unusually clear illustration of the direct dependence of the institution and the ideals it embodied upon the overall political picture in Germany. Again we are made to see that it was not only the Weimar interest groups that shaped the fate of the Bauhaus, but forces working far beyond, moving these groups themselves. The defeat of the Saxon and Thuringian left by forces deployed by the central government emphatically and unmistakably demonstrated that in Germany there was no leftist alternative, and that the democratic constitution had offered no guarantee at all for any ideology or activity that significantly differed from the right-wing and conservative positions. The Bauhaus members and Gropius himself could not have been prepared for this. From the outset, they had considered their opponents to be only the provincial, local bureaucrats and academic artists, against whom they could seek the support of the central government and international opinion. The possibility that all of Germany would eventually be ruled by the likes of Emil Herfurth did not even occur to them; it would have seemed an absurdity.

Between 1919 and 1923 Gropius had come to accept the necessity of meeting the conditions set by society. By making compromises he still hoped to realize the intellectual and artistic strivings of the Bauhaus. But all this time he had been thinking along the rules of fair play and the invincibility of rationalist values; in other words, he believed in the firmness and permanence of the status quo proclaimed by the Weimar constitution. By reattuning itself to industrial design the Bauhaus went more than halfway towards meeting society's needs and now considered the high-quality fulfilment of these needs to be its goal. Thus the school showed its willingness to integrate itself into society, in exchange for freedom of thought and creative work. This attitude was circumspect and rational, for the society that Gropius was thinking of - the republic based on the Weimar constitution - could not but gladly accept the endeavours of the Bauhaus on the behalf of the community, including innovative experimentation.
But Germany in 1924 was no longer what the Bauhaus members had believed it to be.

Meanwhile, production in the workshops was on an upswing. Josef Hartwig's chess set was created around this time, each basically square piece carrying a formal element related to its movement; also the table lamp designed by Wilhelm Wagenfeld and Karl Jucker, which is still being produced. Numerous other successful furniture, textile and metal designs date from this period. More and more students matured into creative individualities; the first generation of graduates was apparently justifying Gropius's practice of dual workshop leadership. Josef Albers, Gunta Stölzl, Marcel Breuer, Herbert Bayer, Joost Schmidt, Otto Lindig, Farkas Molnár, Hinnerk Scheper, all possessed highly schooled yet original formal abilities as well as the necessary professional and technical skills. As Walter Scheidig aptly observes, perhaps the issue was no longer a matter of the unify of art and technology, but of craft and technology. Indeed, art in the strict sense of the word no longer seemed to fit into the new framework: 'These days Gropius is wishing his painters would just go to the devil', wrote Schlemmer. At the same time, the works of Albers, Stölzl and Breuer show an unmistakably intuitive sense of formal design, while their rational, functional forms emanate a characteristic surcharge of aesthetic quality.

In March 1924, Schlemmer noted in his diary: 'The declaration referred frequently to the artist, a term and a type which are actually taboo at the Bauhaus. Well, how about the artist? According to Molnár he is merely an intelligent housepainter executing the commands of "higher necessity". Schlemmer believed that 'the ways will part': the architectonic-constructive tendencies of the new art would resolve into the immediately useful design of utilitarian objects, while 'absolute art' and 'pure form' would continue to deal with the most important aspect, the human element.

In the end Schlemmer was perhaps the only one who did not hesitate to admit that the grand new style, the prerequisite of the Gesamtkunstwerk, the original ideal of 1919, had not been realized and was, in fact, unrealizable. Whereas Gropius, submerged as he was in the stream of ongoing changes, in keeping up with daily contingencies, in spite of all the readjustments, still persisted in the unbroken and consistent experience of what he called the 'Bauhaus idea', Schlemmer gave a precise and frank appraisal of the situation in his diary entry of 12 November 1924: 'Perhaps the ultimate wisdom is: compromise. Developments in Germany and in art are being cut off before their prime. They are falling victim to the tempo of the times. I feel absolute freedom and metaphysical fulfilment have not yet been attained; the degree of formal perfection or of classic form necessary to the development of grand style has not been reached.'

After the declaration of the Weimar Bauhaus's dissolution, there were offers inviting the school to Frankfurt am Main and to Dessau. Gropius and the masters chose Dessau, where Chief Mayor Fritz Hesse and the art historian Ludwig Grote, state supervisor of historic monuments, had done everything in their power in order to assure a favourable reception for the Bauhaus. Hesse organized an effective campaign to popularize the Bauhaus. He headed a delegation to visit the Bauhaus in Weimar and to hear a lecture by Gropius: he invited Kandinsky and Gropius to visit Dessau. Gropius gave a talk about the aims of the Bauhaus to an audience of one thousand that included several ministers of the state and many of the leading citizens. At the same time, in Dessau, a town similar in size to Weimar and with similar local attitudes, the Bauhaus had its share of opponents
who resented it either because of the school's leftist reputation or because of local craft interests. But whereas in Weimar the school had been a state institution, in Dessau it came under town jurisdiction. Here the municipal council voted the school's budget.

In an open letter the students of the Bauhaus in Weimar expressed their solidarity with the masters, whom they would follow to Dessau. Here Gropius put an end to the dual leadership of the workshops. After Josef Albers, five other graduates were appointed junior masters: Herbert Bayer to conduct the advertising and typography workshop, Marcel Breuer the cabinet-making workshop, Hinriker Scheper, the mural painting workshop, Joost Schmidt, the sculpture workshop and a course in lettering graphics, and Gunta Stölzl, after the departure of Georg Muche in 1927, to head the textile workshop. A few crafts masters left the school, and one of the art masters, Gerhard Marcks, accepted an appointment in Halle, as head of the department of ceramics at the School of Applied Arts. Also gone was Adolf Meyer, Gropius's closest design associate. Emil Lange, who disagreed with Gropius about the conversion of the Bauhaus into a production plant, likewise left the school.

Dr Haas, a young Dessau economist, was appointed as the new business manager. In the autumn of 1925 the Bauhaus was incorporated as a limited liability corporation. The registered capital required for incorporation was provided by that long-standing patron of the Bauhaus, Adolf Sommerfeld, obviating the necessity of approval by the municipal council. In order to guarantee that the town's interests would be safeguarded, the Bauhaus's business manager became the financial director of the new corporation.

The first and perhaps most significant act of the Bauhaus in Dessau was, at last, an architectural opus: a version of the Gesamtkunstwerk as it was conceivable in 1925. Gropius presented the Dessau municipal council with a proposal for an architectural complex consisting of a workshop building, a school building and a dormitory with studio apartments for 28 students. Rather unexpectedly, the entire project was approved. Construction was begun in September 1925. One wing of the brick- and glass-covered, reinforced concrete structure consisted of workshops and classrooms. At the level of the second and third floors a bridge supported by four pillars joined this to the other wing, which housed office space, faculty rooms, and additional classrooms for the Dessau Polytechnic Institute. Offices took up the lower level of the bridge; the upper level was reserved for the future architecture department and for Gropius's private office. There was an exhibition area in the workshop wing, and on the ground floor, near the entrance, a large lecture hall, theatre and cafeteria were clustered so that the three could be combined into one large space. Through this area one approached the six-storey dormitory building, the basement of which included a gymnasium and shower rooms. 'Thus, the Bauhaus, like a small world, contained within itself all spheres of life: living, eating, working, learning, entertainment, sports, and recreation. This combination of activities typified the famous community spirit, parties, and events of the Bauhaus,' writes Winfried Nerdinger.

One could reach any part of the building via the inner corridors; according to Xanti Schawinsky, one of the students, the 'wonderful community spirit' of the Bauhaus was in large part due to Gropius's building. 'All you had to do to call a friend was to step out onto your balcony and whistle,' he wrote. All of the interior finish, painting and furniture of the building was executed by the various Bauhaus workshops.

The Bauhaus building evokes the Alfeld Fagus Works. The concealed nature of the underlying structural elements, the wall of glass surrounding the workshop wing ('In
Dessau the Bauhaus was known as "the Aquarium" and the likewise largely glass-covered bridge realize a confident union of precision and elegance. This 'etherealization' of architecture, as Frank Lloyd Wright called it in 1901, is one of the most prominent characteristics of the new style. According to Nerdinger, 'Especially the glass wall in the workshop wing illustrated Gropius's old desire to create a point of crystallization for the new era. It is much more than just a "transparent" plane ... The glass body is the last symbol of the expressionist reform movement and as such is not to be judged from a functional point of view (with its orientation to the west, the glass heated up in summer and the workshops could not be kept warm in winter).

Indeed, ever since the proclamation of the ideal Gesamtkunstwerk ('the crystallized symbol of a new faith'), this was the first chance Gropius had for epitomizing his concept of the timely and modern in an architectural opus. He was given the opportunity to create an integral work of art that was suitable for the complex functions of the Bauhaus and also served as the equivalent of a manifesto. As a material glass was the most concentrated and radiant symbol of the new spirit in architecture. The glass wall created a blurring of the boundary between 'inside' and 'outside', and its lightness and ethereal nature added a triumphant note to the slender reinforced concrete supporting structure. These properties of glass contributed the emotive surplus that was so important for Gropius. By injecting functionalism into the representative, highly expressive architectural ideals of the former Glass Chain, Gropius offered proof positive that here, indeed, was a new unity.

In September 1925, parallel to the construction of the Bauhaus building, construction was begun of the three pairs of semi-detached masters' residences: flat-roofed homes, complete with studios, for Kandinsky, Klee, Moholy-Nagy, Feininger, Schlemmer and Muche, and a free-standing house for Gropius. These houses were ready to be occupied in August 1926. The interior fixtures and furnishings were products of the Bauhaus workshops, and the interior walls were painted by the residents themselves. 'As the Bauhaus building was to be the architectural manifestation of the Bauhaus idea, the master houses served as demonstrations of a modern life and living style,' writes Nerdinger. The built-in wardrobes, the storage closets opening at both ends and the stately proportions all illustrated the Bauhaus-evolved notions of a normative home lifestyle. These houses, with their pleasantly articulated masses derived from prismatic shapes, are generally thought to be Gropius's most successful residential designs. Although the white walls and the windows and doors interrupting them did not present the two-dimensional, painting-like image of De Stijl buildings, these houses possess another kind of harmony. (Gropius's house and the building next to it were destroyed during the war; the others were renovated, but are structurally impaired.)

The new Bauhaus building was dedicated on 4 December 1926. The government of Anhalt approved the new Bauhaus statutes on 20 October, and granted the school university status. The new designation of the Bauhaus became Hochschule fur Gestaltung - College of Design. More than fifteen hundred guests arrived for the opening ceremonies, including the Dessau notables, among them Professor Junkers, the owner of the airplane factory. Other prominent guests travelled from Berlin, Leipzig, Holland, Switzerland, France and Denmark. Gropius gave an address in which he emphasized the consistent path of the Bauhaus, the purity of its ideals, as well as the importance of maintaining the ties between industry, the crafts, the sciences and the 'creative design forces' (by which he probably meant the arts). In a reply address, Dr Edwin Redslab, art commissioner of the Republic (Reichskunstwart) proclaimed: 'The Bauhaus has the right to experiment, and
the duty to produce." Meanwhile the new local opponents of the Bauhaus were pressing leaflets into the hands of guests arriving for the evening ball.

21 The first issue of the periodical bauhaus appeared at the time of the building’s dedication. This quarterly publication was edited, until the 1928/1 issue, by Gropius and Moholy-Nagy; the latter also edited the series of Bauhaus books. While the quarterly tended to be a forum for the school’s internal life, the book series included theoretical monographs and manifestos.28

22 The new Bauhaus complex emanated an entirely different atmosphere than the van de Velde building in Weimar. The new building, with its clean lines manifesting a strictly functional modernism down to the smallest detail, its food elevator serving every floor, and its totally contemporary lighting fixtures and furniture hardly gave the impression of a craft school. It was the embodiment of the spirit of objective and effective, precise and modern design work.

23 The new typography, as elaborated by Herbert Bayer, was conceived in the same spirit: simplified, rounded off - a type of grotesque or sans serif - consisting of lower case letters only. It gave a unified look to every Bauhaus publication, exhibition flyer, piece of stationery, and had perhaps the greatest single role in defining the characteristic visual profile of the Bauhaus.29 The omission of capital letters, even at the cost of violating German orthography, had deep roots in the modernism of the age. Similarly, the passionate, emotional ring of Ziel ('destination', 'goal') was replaced by the more modest and direct Zweck ('aim', 'design'); instead of Theater, Bühne ('stage') was preferred, and the rejection of Kunst ('art') in favour of Gestaltung ('design', 'form-creation') all signalled a shift in outlook regarding the entire field of fine arts and applied art. The most significant indication of this was the altered use of the word for architecture, perhaps the clearest equivalent of the shift to lower case letters. Instead of the implicitly capitalized ring and self-importance of Architektur, the modest and practical Bauen ('build', 'construct') came to be used. Siegfried Giedion wrote about the Werkbund exhibition of 1928, 'Neues Bauen' ('New Architecture'): 'Why is this exhibition entitled "Neues Bauen", and why not simply "Neue Architektur"? We are not intimidated by the word Architektur, but it has a delimited meaning that is no longer valid today. The concept of architecture evokes the usual ... large-scale stone buildings, while today's materials, steel and reinforced concrete, condense the actual supporting structure of the building into a slim skeleton. This necessarily leads to formal solutions different from that of stone ... Architecture is the last to enter the process of industrialization. The transfer from handicrafts to industrial production, from individual to collective creation, has been going on with compelling force for some centuries. This means that the same arguments that were used against mechanized looms, railroads and sewing machines are now being used against architecture.'30

24 Now that typography, the design of objects and the building itself imbued the Bauhaus with a unified outlook - even if it was not yet a unified style - the school indeed came very close to the idea of the Gesamtkunstwerk in its original, 1919 sense. For what was emerging was precisely the approach and the closely related set of design ideas that could point the way to a new style. The change in outlook that came about at this time had been formulated even before Giedion by Kállai in 1924, following the dissolution of the various Constructivist Utopias (when Lajos Kassák issued his terse slogan, 'Back to the workbench!'): 'And where there is no cult developed around ideological abstractions, there can be no architecure in the old sense of the word that includes every subordinate
art form and every formal detail ... Today's architecture, too, possesses a central idea. It is maximal efficiency. Kállai had outspokenly stated what Gropius never said in so many words. While Gropius spoke about the continuity of the Bauhaus programme and Bauhaus concept, Kállai called this transformation by its proper name: 'The new architecture ... should not purport to be more than unostentatious clothing or shelter. Nor should it try for the role of Stadtkrone ['crown of the city'] ... and be a gawky idol, squatting on the horizon in the manner of pyramids and domes ... It is sad enough that the monumentality of factory smokestacks, blast furnaces and tenements oppresses our daily life. Therefore let us not wish for additional stone monsters, adulatory ideological monoliths, to tower over us.'

No matter how significant the divergences in the work of the Bauhaus artists and designers may be, in one vital respect a collective creation did come about at the Bauhaus. It became clearly obvious by the 1923-4 school year, not only in the projects done in the Preliminary Course, but in the objects created in the workshops as well, that everything had to be rethought, starting with the basics, the elementary forms and qualities -and in this the students received invaluable help from Klee and Kandinsky, of all people. Klee's 'Theory of Form' course, and Kandinsky's course, 'Form and Colour Studies', both analysed the properties of the basic units of composition, the elementary forms and colours. No matter how far these two men had retreated from the school's new, industrial orientation and technocentric outlook, nonetheless they introduced an entire generation of students to the neutral fundamental principles of pictorial composition, rethinking with them the meanings of point, line, plane, movement -the most elementary and minimal visual gestures.

This kind of reductionism, such restriction of formal and expressive means to the basics was the equivalent of taking a step back before leaping forward. In order to develop a new world of form, one had to return to the neutral basics not only to circumvent the existing formal order, but also to realize the more far-reaching task of reattuning the sensibility. This of course would not have been possible if there had not been a call for it 'in the air', for lack of a better term. After the by now familiar barrage of expressionist orgies in colour and form that stretched pictorial dynamics and histrionics to the limits, the new sensibility had to be returned to a resting point, a formal and emotive ground zero, where it could begin anew to register the weight and importance of minimal stimuli. The scale had to be altered. Here was a call for sober economy of means, after the prodigal outpouring of expressive energies. The basic unit of the new pictorial and formal expression - the new aesthetics -became the meaning inherent in the smallest increments in value differences, the slightest shifts. By making artist and viewer again receptive to minimal stimuli, the foundations of a new formal language were laid down.
The recently appointed young masters had an outstanding role in this process. For them, it would have been strange and inconceivable to make a vow such as Muche's when he, a painter, had been appointed to head the textile workshop: 'I promised myself that never in my life would I let my hands prepare a textile design'. The new masters were far more open-minded and multifaceted than this. In fact they were equally at home in handling practical workshop problems, dealing with materials and composing works of art. Marcel Breuer abandoned a career as a painter for the sake of furniture design, and then switched to architecture, while continuing to work in the theatre. Gunta Stölzl's textiles were in many instances works of visual art. Joost Schmidt's sculptures were expressive by themselves, as well as functional as architectural elements. In addition, while chiefly a sculptor, he also excelled in applied graphics. These young masters were far less restricted by specialization, far less limited in scope, than their crafts masters had been. In addition, what they learned from their artist masters was not merely a mode of work directed towards the creation of the autonomous work of art, but the basic elements of composition.

The most striking characteristic of the moderately successful as well as the subsequently famous Bauhaus students is their extraordinary versatility. It would not be an exaggeration to say that most of them had turned their hands to everything before leaving the school... They could paint, take photographs, design furniture, throw pots and sculpt. Herbert Bayer and Marcel Breuer could design buildings as well. Franz Singer, one of the students who followed Itten from Vienna, was interested only in painting when he arrived in Weimar. At the Bauhaus he learned to master several crafts, and after he had qualified he became an architect and interior decorator, working much later as a consultant in London for the John Lewis Partnership. Marianne Brandt, who joined the Bauhaus in 1924 and became renowned for her adjustable metal lamps, was also a talented painter, and made photomontages that are witty, imaginative and clever.
28 These young artists were in fact a new type of creative worker, and not merely artists in the traditional sense of the word. Their works do not convey highly emotional or deeply personal experiences. Instead, they stand for reliable quality, solid construction, witty ideas and a high aesthetic level of realization. Their artifacts, instead of traversing the distances from soul to soul, simply move from the designer's desk to the consumer's table. Even the pictorial compositions of Albers, Schmidt or even Gunta Stölzl (excepting some of her textile compositions) are more readily seen as formal intellectual games, systematic actions aimed at uncovering the internal orders of geometry or the colour scale, rather than impulsive, unique self-revelations, or subjective manifestations illuminating the underlying issues of existence.

29 This was the spirit in which Josef Albers conducted his Preliminary Course, demanding primarily constructions from the students. Unlike Itten and Moholy-Nagy, he interpreted textural exercises by asking students to illustrate, through graphic and painterly means, the diverse materials and textures - instead of indulging in actual tactile experiences. Along the lines of the new spirit, and enhancing its practical features, he placed extraordinary emphasis on economy of materials. He made his students aware of the changed circumstances: it was no longer the philosophic viewpoint that determined the value of pedagogical or artistic work, but considerations of economics which had to be accommodated. As the most important task he singled out the totally efficient use of materials, stressing the supreme importance of no waste. A basic premise was that no material should be lost; the negative shapes of materials that were cut out also had to be used, if possible in the same work (this constituted a true coup) or else independently. Those students received praise who, using one tool and one procedure (for example, scissors and cutting) created large, complex compositions of maximal interest, out of a single material. One of the students, Hannes Beckmann, writes in his memoirs:

Josef Albers entered the classroom with a bundle of newspapers under his arm. 'Ladies and gentlemen,' he said, 'we are poor, and not rich. We cannot afford to waste materials or time. Every piece of work has a certain starting material, and therefore we must examine the nature of this material. Towards this end we wish to experiment at first without creating anything. Now we are going to rely on our sense of beauty. The usefulness of a form depends on the material we are working in. Remember that often the fewest gestures take us the longest way... I would like you to take these newspapers in hand, and make something more out of them than what they are at present. I would also like you to respect the material, shape it intelligently, and with special attention to its particular characteristics. If you can do without any accessories, such as cutters, scissors or glue, all the better' . . . Several hours later he returned, and made us lay out the finished objects on the floor.

30 Multifaceted training, first-hand sensory contact with materials, and an overview of the entire process of production were all experimental solutions to the question that was the central issue at the Dessau Bauhaus. Like the unification of art and technology, this, too, remained an insoluble dilemma: how to realize the ideal of the whole man, to replace what Moholy-Nagy liked to call the partial man.
Gropius made a habit of regularly inviting guests to the Bauhaus. Architects, philosophers and composers came from all over Europe to Dessau, to give lectures, to meet the Bauhaus people, and to get to know the school. These visitors opened up the intellectual avenues leading to the Bauhaus, and allowed contemporary European culture to stream past the steadily rigidifying walls of Dessau. Among those invited was Béla Bartók, who traveled to Dessau on 12-13 October 1927, after the performance of his First Piano Concerto in Frankfurt. At a concert he gave for the Friends of the Bauhaus he performed some of his own works as well. To the surprise of many, he showed only passing interest in the Bauhaus stage, but was deeply receptive to the long-term implications of the work going
on at the school. He was especially taken by Kandinsky's 1926 volume, *Point and Line to Plane*, seeing it as evidence of the connections between modern music and modern art. 40

In Dessau - especially after the erection of the Bauhaus building - the ideal of the Gesamtkunstwerk shifted from architecture, which unites the arts and crafts, to the human being. It was no longer an object, but an ideal human being, that was expected to be the realization of wholeness as a utopianistic objective. Although there arose some absolutely Utopian architectural designs - Gropius's plan for a 'Total Theatre', Andor Weininger's drawing of a 'Spherical Theatre', and Farkas Molnár's 'U-Theatre', all of them analogies of the universe - still, Gropius, Schlemmer, Moholy-Nagy and many others at the Bauhaus thought in terms of an ideal far beyond practical tasks, which they called the *whole man*. In their thought-experiments they attempted to resolve the contradictions between an immediate, sensory experience of life and the hazy figure of the 'perfect technician' at the control panel of a future automated world-machine. The microcosm of the stage was the most suitable experimental field for these Utopias, since the mechanically controlled stage machinery and the spherical design of these utopianistic theatres presented with striking three-dimensionality the form and fate of the coming human who would live a new kind of life in the cosmos. 'A specialized education becomes meaningful only if an integrated man is developed in terms of his biological functions, so that he will achieve a natural balance of intellectual and emotional power. Without such an aim the richest differentiations of specialized study ... are mere quantitative acquisitions, bringing no intensification of life, no widening of its breadth ... these are the foundations for developing a mastery of all of life, for finding one's proper place within the community.' So writes Moholy-Nagy under the heading 'The future needs the whole man'. 41 But this 'proper place within the community' demanded or presupposed the performance of a specialist function and a 'specialized training'. If humans were to be emancipated from such limitations, in exchange for the intellectual ability to oversee a whole universe they would have to give up the sphere of first-hand experience, life's sensory dimensions. Whereas Gropius and Moholy-Nagy had intended to save for future generations a certain characteristic of the craftsman, the ability to oversee the entire creative process and the opportunity of freely changing it - as opposed to the Industrial worker who is condemned to execute a mechanical, partial function that hinders personal development. What is more, the craftsman is also able to follow the path of his product in society. The whole
man, the new human type of the future, would only be able to compete with his
craftsman forerunner by altering the relationship of man and machine: by acting only in
the capacity of designer. Instead of adjusting his labour to the requirements and
possibilities of machines that are primarily geared to produce in maximal quantities, the
new man, on the basis of altered needs, would prescribe to the machine what and how it
should produce. The new aim was 'evolving goods and buildings specifically designed for
industrial production'.

At the same time it meant recognizing that 'the machine is... an instrument which is to
relieve man of the most oppressive physical labour and serve to strengthen his hand so as
to enable him to give form to his creative impulse ... The work of the new man will
become an organic part of unified industrial production ... for creative freedom does not
reside in the infinitude of means of expression, but in free movement within its strictly
legal bounds'. Therefore the worker must turn into an engineer; and here, according to
Gropius's ideas, we are dealing with a transformation of handicrafts and art that would
meld the creative intellectual and manual work into a single design process. Design
means the formal and structural shaping of the product along the lines of its function, as
well as the specification of its production technology. Thus the designer must be familiar
with the consumers' needs in order to know what has to be designed; and with the means
of production, the machines, in order to know the technological limitations within which
the object has to be conceived. This way man is freed of actual physical labour, or at least
such labour would not have to follow the pace and rhythms of machine production.
Nonetheless, a considerable price must still be paid: the work of the human intellect and
imagination - design - must be routinely adjusted to the machine. But this idea should not
be read as a restriction of unlimited human intellectual capacities to fit the bounds of
technology, a voluntary decision to stay 'within limits set by stringent laws'. On the
contrary: it should be taken as a celebration of the endless possibilities of a technology
that would provide wings for human imagination and creativity. The new ideal is the
human being capable of maximal enjoyment of the new potentials - 'the perfect engineer
of the world'. And, in order to preserve at least some memories of the organic, material
world, Moholy-Nagy decided to continue to teach tactile exercises and the study of
materials in his Preliminary Course.
The first, Gropius-directed years of the Dessau Bauhaus saw stage works that were exclusively mechanical variety shows, plays of audio-visual form. These were the mechanized colour/form compositions of Andor Weininger and Heinz Loew, evoking a world in which, according to Ernő Kállai, 'human fates would be coordinated as traffic patterns are on the tracks of an electric toy train: without accidents and catastrophes.' But Kállai immediately appends the critique of such Utopias: 'But also without community. Because in a community of humans where entire networks of interpersonal relations, with all their mutual interdependences or autonomies, are laid open in a predetermined constellation, there cannot be shared fates - for lack of fatality - and beyond this, there cannot be emotional ties, shared feelings. Humans, whose consciousness, its entire form and content untouched by unconscious impulses, lies exposed perfectly visible for themselves and for others, cannot experience true union, beyond practical alliances and transient associations. Their relations, lacking any tragic potential, and without a past, cannot help but remain mechanical and superficial.' Schlemmer himself expressed similar ideas in 1927, as he drew his conclusions from the mechanical stage: 'Since we do not have a perfected mechanical stage ... man remains perforce our essential element. And of course he will remain so as long as the stage exists. In contradistinction to the rationalistically determined world of space, form, and colour, man is the vessel of the subconscious, the unmediated experience, and the transcendental.'

In the end it was this unavoidable fact that shipwrecked these Utopias; it was the acknowledgment or neglect of these dimensions that was the true watershed between the so-called artistic sphere of the Bauhaus and the design sphere. Klee, Kandinsky and Schlemmer were unable to find a common language, or more accurately, an actual intellectual platform and work programme to share with Moholy-Nagy and Gropius, whose work and interpretation of the Bauhaus's goals focused on the more outward,
social-oriented and definable activities. Of course the questions remain: to what extent can an educational institution be permeated by philosophy? And is artistic radicalism compatible with social radicalism that is, in comparison, so much tamer, and much more of a public property?

Gropius himself desired to resolve the dilemma of part versus whole in the field of architecture, in an original conclusion drawn from the relation of human and machine. He posited a characteristically Groplus-like equilibrium, in a speech delivered in 1927: 'Individual freedom can be guaranteed if only certain parts are standardized, whereas the rest of the building is shaped according to personal requirements.' This proposal, although not the cheapest way of constructing dwellings, would have been easily realizable. But if this formula had indeed guaranteed that soothing equilibrium, satisfactory to all parties, between the opposed poles of part and whole, individual and collective, individuum and society, then there would have been no need for the existence of the Bauhaus.

NOTES

2. Ibid., p. 124.
3. Ibid., p. 127.
5. Miller-Lane, op. cit., p. 80.
7. See chapter 7, note 19. As Moholy-Nagy informed van Doesburg in reply to his letter, they had received a similar communication from De Stijl architect Cornells van Eesteren.
10. Schlemmer, Diary entry, 18 March 1924; ibid., pp. 151-2.
11. Ibid.
12. Ibid., entry of 12 November 1924, p. 156.
13. The Bauhaus was a state institution, so that if did not have the power to dissolve itself autonomously. The state, however, accepted and approved the dissolution of the school, since it was publicly announced.
14. Wingler, op. cit., p. 7: Frankfurt am Main would have accepted the painters, but not the director.
17. Lange, Letter to Gropius, February 1924; Bauhaus Archiv, unit no. 7/4.
18. Hesse, op. cit., p. 211.
19. Nerdinger, op. cit., p. 70: 'The planning process is interesting in more than one respect: Since Adolf Meyer, head of Gropius's office, had not moved to Dessau, Gropius asked his old co-worker Carl Fieger to work on the design. Later, Mrs Fieger made some general comments about the collaboration: "her husband... made some sketches which Gropius then changed and used to explain his Ideas." it is unclear whether it was Reger or Ernst Neufert, Meyer's successor as head of the office, who continued working on the project. In any case, Gropius, who practically never drew himself, succeeded on the basis of his verbal abilities, without Meyer, in creating an excellent design... Because Gropius wanted to make the new Bauhaus building a showpiece and working model of his theory of art and architecture, it is safe to assume that in this case he was most especially Involved in the design.'

20. Ibid.


22. Whitford, op. cit., p. 158.


25. Ibid., p. 76.


27. Ibid.


29. Ct. Herzogenrath, 'Typographie in der Reklame-Werkstatt'; In Bauhaus Utopien, op. cit., pp. 103-15. 'The lower case lettering went hand in hand with the new design, and, along with the Dessau Bauhaus building, became one of the stumbling blocks that elicited the Nazis' hatred. At the time when the Dessau mayor Hofmann (who, unlike his superior, Chief Mayor Hesse, was no friend of the Bauhaus) prohibited lower case writing, and instructed government officials not to accept any documents written in that style, the Nazi Party, in the heat of the election campaign, was ready to tear down the Bauhaus building.' (p. 112)


31. Kassák. 'Vissza a kaptáfához' (Back to the Workbench); in MA. IX/1, Vienna. 15 September 1923.

32. Kállai, 'Architektura'; ibid.

33. Taut, 'Die Stadtkrone'. Jena. 1919.

34. Kállai. op. cit.

35. See chapter 6, note 36.

36. Whitford, op. cit.? p. 70.


39. Ibid.


41. For the designs, see Wensinger (transl.), op. cit., pp. 57-62 ('U Theatre', p. 86; Groplus, 'Plan for a Total Theatre'). For Weininger's design of a Spherical Theatre, see Michaud, op. cit., p. 109.


44. Ibid., pp. 20-5.

45. Kállai. 'Korrektúrát'; see chapter 8, note 28.

46. Ibid.

47. Schlemmer. 'Bühne'; in Wensinger (transl.), op. cit., p. 91.
48. 'Groplus über den typisierten Siedlungsbau' (lecture text); in Magdeburgische Zeitung. 16 October 1927; quoted by Isaacs, op. cit., p. 419.
Chapter 13. Why did Gropius Leave?

'SOME TIME ago, among other papers pertaining to the Bauhaus period, I found a diary that my wife kept from 1923 to 1928 and that we had not looked at since. I began to read and the further I went the more depressed I became, for it became clear from the text that about 90 per cent of the unprecedented efforts made by all participants in this undertaking went into countering national and local hostility, and only 10 per cent remained for actual creative work,' wrote Gropius shortly before his death. These struggles, as Gropius so clearly noted in hindsight, no matter how passionate and romantic they had been at the outset, also brought about, beside the visible end-results of moral victory and practical failure, the slow and steady erosion of energies.

In Dessau, Gropius composed a new programme for the new life of the new institute among new circumstances, but, in line with the lower case outlook that now affected his thinking, he no longer called it a manifesto, not even a programme. He gave the plain title Bauhaus Dessau - Principles of Bauhaus Production to the text published as a leaflet, in which he once and for all designated design as the task of the Bauhaus.

The creation of standard types for all practical commodities of everyday use is a social necessity. On the whole, the necessities of life are the same for the majority of people. The home and its furnishings are mass consumer goods, and their design is more a matter of reason than a matter of passion. The machine -capable of producing standardized products - is an effective device, which, by means of mechanical aids - steam and electricity - can free the individual from working manually for the satisfaction of his daily needs and can provide him with mass-produced products that are cheaper and better than those manufactured by hand. There is no danger that standardization will force a choice upon the individual, since due to natural competition the number of available types of each object will always be abundant enough to provide the individual with a choice of design that suits him best.

The Bauhaus workshops are essentially laboratories in which prototypes of products suitable for mass production and typical of our time are carefully developed and constantly improved. In these laboratories the Bauhaus wants to train a new kind of collaborator for industry and the crafts, who has an equal command of both technology and form. To reach the objective of creating a set of standard prototypes which meet all the demands of economy, technology, and form, requires the selection of the best, most versatile, most thoroughly educated men who are imbued with an exact knowledge of the design elements of form and mechanics and their underlying laws ... The Bauhaus will fight against the cheap
substitute, inferior workmanship, and the dilettantism of the handicrafts, for a new standard of quality work.3

Gropius published this programme declaration indebted to early Werkbund Ideals in March 1926. Perhaps as a counter-proposal, Kandinsky published a text in the December 1926 issue of Bauhaus, entitled 'The Value of Theoretical Instruction in Painting'. In this piece, Kandinsky places in the focus of Bauhaus training the very motifs Gropius had ignored in his programme. His thrust is unmistakably aimed at the latter:

The inner, deeply involved understanding of the means and the simultaneously conscious and unconscious activity with these means discard all those purposes alien to art which, thus, appear unnatural and repulsive ... In practice, extreme specialization represents a heavy wall that separates us from the efforts to achieve a synthesis. I hope I need not prove a number of facts generally known today: for example, the recognition of laws in the composition of paintings. Yet, for the student to acknowledge this basic fact is not in itself sufficient - it must be implanted inside the student and it must be done with such thoroughness that the knowledge of this fact enters into his fingertips all by itself. The most moderate or the most powerful 'dream' of the artist has actually little or no value as long as his fingertips are incapable of following the 'dictates' of this dream with the utmost precision ... An understanding of the laws of nature is absolutely necessary for the artist. But this simple fact is still entirely unknown to the art academies.4

The conflict between Gropius and Kandinsky was an inherent opposition just as Gropius and Itten's had been, but at least until the 1923 exhibition the emotions were relegated into the background by the mutual willingness to cooperate and the shared task of keeping the Bauhaus alive. This was all the more so since Kandinsky's professed belief in the synthetic work of art as well as his attempts at a Gesamtkunstwerk on the stage were in close spiritual relation to the 1919 Bauhaus ideal that was still in effect when Kandinsky accepted Gropius's invitation. However, after the declaration of the 'new unity' of art and technology, the two men grew apart at an increasing rate. Their behaviour towards each other wore a thinning veneer of mutual tolerance. Already in 1925 Gropius had written in a letter to his wife: 'Last night at the Kandinskys', both of them are fat, sun-tanned and rested. I am sorry to see that both they and Klee are increasingly considering the Bauhaus as a sinecure - alas, another disappointment'.5 The disappointment was only partially justifiable, since, as we may recall, back in the Weimar days Gropius had invited Klee and Kandinsky largely in order to upgrade the school's image - as 'persons well known in the outside world' whose presence would be important 'even if deep down we do not as yet fully understand them'.6 However, since those Weimar days history had in a sense pulled the rug from under Gropius's feet, or, more specifically, had taken some of the novelty from his Bauhaus concept. By now the entire German economy was operating on the ground rules of inexpensive, rational, efficient production, naturally taking the form of prototypes and mass production. This, as a programme, no longer required for its fulfilment a rebel with a sense of mission, ready to set a personal example. It is no accident that Gropius in his Dessau programme statement stressed quality, a word that he had not resorted to with such emphasis since his early Werkbund days; quality was the only category left that could still mean an ethical superiority vis-à-vis manufacturers solely motivated by profit. It was also true, however, that the requirement of quality contradicted the principles of low cost and efficiency. Gropius no longer employed the word art, but we may with good reason suppose that by quality he meant the presence of art. In other words, according to his programme, the Bauhaus would produce objects (or
designs) that would reflect the many-sidedness and rich imagination characterizing the members of the Bauhaus.

Still, we must note that by the second half of the Twenties much of the energy that stemmed from confrontation and the related sense of mission had in fact evaporated. Efficiency of production, and the corresponding design culture, irrevocably permeated the recovering German economy, so that individual self-expression had again come to seem rebellious. The passion and romantic aura surrounding the collective creative work had evaporated, and again, although as yet barely overtly, came to be associated with the individual work of creation. Gropius’s concept, it seemed, had won a Pyrrhic victory. The principle itself conquered society in such a way that it became absorbed by it ('Bauhaus style', Ernd Kdllai would proclaim two years later). As for the ethical surplus concentrated in the principle of quality, in practice it only burdened the image of the Bauhaus with a cachet of exclusiveness and elitism.

Klee and Kandinsky on the one hand, and Gropius on the other, represented two widely divergent creative and historical attitudes. It was Gropius’s outlook, that of identifying with the present social order, that stood to lose. It had been proved that the unity of art and technology was nothing more than an empty play on words, and that the Bauhaus, in spite of all its successful products and stockpile of intellectual and artistic capital, had been able to share with the rest of society only the most superficial layers of its productivity, it had also become quite apparent that although friendly and creative communities existed within the school, the Bauhaus as a whole had not jelled into one large community, following the illusions of 1919.

In addition, although the Bauhaus in Dessau had built its school complex and masters’ residences, the financial position of the school in 1926 was, if anything, even worse than it had been in Weimar. This, naturally, helped to sharpen the emerging dichotomies. The Bauhaus did not always receive the payments due for industrial orders; in spite of much debate, the moneys refused to accrue with regularity. The town itself was not in a financial position to support the school. The Bauhaus did gain in prestige, so that when the issue of professorial titles for the masters again arose (Klee and Kandinsky definitely wanted it), the State Ministry of Anhalt granted the Bauhaus university status on 1 October 1926. From then on the masters were titled professors, and the Masters’ Council became the Conference. With this, the Bauhaus took another significant step towards integration with society: the masters now accepted the academic title that Gropius, perhaps under the influence of Bartning and the Arbeitsrat’s ideals, had so proudly refused in 1922.

By the end of August 1926 the desperate financial picture of the Bauhaus forced Gropius to take a surprising step. He asked his faculty to donate 10 per cent of their salaries for a transitional period to help the Bauhaus survive. Most of them were willing to do this; Klee and Kandinsky, however, adamantly rejected the proposal. This event might confuse the historian - after all, what entitles us to look into the personal finances of artists? However, we may feel justified, given the moment in time and the nature of the conflict between the very individuals whose personal data may reveal the depth of the rift that developed from the fault line between the artists of the Bauhaus and its design-oriented leadership. Otherwise the event would hardly possess any significance for us. Klee wrote to Gropius on his own and Kandinsky’s behalf, closing his letter with, 'I look gloomily ahead to further negotiations and am afraid of something that was avoided even during the worst phase at Weimar: an inner disruption.'
Gropius answered in no uncertain terms about six weeks later, a delay unusual for him: 'Your letter disturbed me, and I am unable to understand even today your refusal in a situation, difficult for all of us ... I simply cannot believe that you, dear Herr Klee, will desert me in this matter, and I cordially request you to support me. I am showing this letter to Kandinsky simultaneously and am making the same request of [him].' The affair was resolved by a compromise - the two masters offered the Bauhaus 5 per cent of their salaries for a short period.

Although Klee had the reputation of being a stickler in matters of money, it would appear that money was not the central issue in this episode. Rather, it was the relationship of Gropius and the two painters, or, if you will, that of technology and art, which was not cohesive enough to keep the Bauhaus sufficiently unified for a conflict-free resolution of this otherwise not overly dramatic situation. This time it was not indirectly, through signs and impressions, but through a clear-cut message - Klee and Kandinsky's refusal of his request - that Gropius was made to understand: the Bauhaus no longer meant the same to them as to him. Nearly thirty years later ise Gropius wrote in a letter:

In their behaviour at the time I see that they caused disappointment as human beings, and evidence that they never really understood Walter's ideas... The Bauhaus... was not established in order to give a few remarkable painters the financial independence to live entirely for their art. Of course they had an extremely important effect on the school, but the danger existed that their art would become even more insularized and thereby lose its fertilizing aspect. Had it been a matter of Klee and Kandinsky offering some other solution to the situation, this would have been an entirely different problem. It was their abstention, their withdrawal, their non-participation, that we objected to and found antithetical to the spirit of the Bauhaus.

Soon a new conflict arose: in early 1927 Gropius wanted to share some of his responsibilities and official duties with the masters by delegating some of these tasks to them. He wrote a circular letter to the masters, which was left unanswered for a long time, without even being returned with the signatures of those who had read and acknowledged it. When Gropius began to investigate the trail of the letter, he found that Moholy-Nagy had handed it to Muche, the latter to Breuer, where the tracks were lost. Breuer excused himself, citing his busy schedule; other addressees of the letter, Kandinsky among them, stated that they had never seen it. Gropius wrote Kandinsky another letter, in which he asked for cooperation in an almost desperate tone:

Your letter, alas, made me my actual situation here at the Bauhaus, the superhuman burdens I have to carry here, which is further significantly increased through the malfunctioning or seclusion of some of the masters.
I have to declare today that I can only continue to work if I receive the distinct assurance of the masters to support me more than up to now. Otherwise I have to withdraw, because it is of no use to wear oneself out for nothing.
I hope you will understand and help me.

Of course we should consider the situation of Gropius and the Bauhaus in its entire complexity, embedded in the circumstances of Dessau and of Germany, to appreciate the factors that quenched the inner conviction that had fuelled Gropius to do everything within his power - schemes, diplomatic manoeuvres within and without the Bauhaus - in order to keep the institution going. The increasingly undeniable fact that the Bauhaus, in spite of the rising quality of its workshop production, failed to weld into the organic collective willing to make sacrifices for the communal goal that had been one of Gropius's chief aims, had a demoralizing effect. The common goal, as a result of the exhausting
efforts to eke out an existence for the school, became the survival of the school itself. In
the increasingly right-wing atmosphere at Dessau the Bauhaus now had a growing and
malicious camp of opponents, just like in Weimar. Even Mayor Fritz Hesse, who had been
the number one patron of the Bauhaus, came to have a strained relationship with
Gropius, as a result of the latter's frequent trips and subsequent unavailability at his
office. On one occasion the mayor even threatened to deduct the days that Gropius
absented himself on non-Bauhaus business from his vacation time.\footnote{12}

To all these circumstances further disappointments were added. Already in 1927 Gropius
had begun to consider the matter of his own successor - the statement about the
untenability of his situation in the letter to Kandinsky was no empty threat. At first he
might have had Marcel Breuer in mind, whom he considered his most talented student
(and whom he had already, at the time of the move to Dessau, recalled to the Bauhaus
from Paris).\footnote{13} However, Breuer entangled him in a most difficult situation. Quite
understandably Gropius considered it extremely important that objects produced at the
Bauhaus should be propagated as the intellectual and factual property of the school.
Beyond the industrial contacts and the profit these meant, these objects were expected to
gradually cohere into that image of the Bauhaus which corresponded to Gropius's
conceptions and to reality as well. However Breuer, who, learning to ride his bicycle upon
his arrival in Dessau, stumbled upon the idea of tubular steel furniture,\footnote{14} came to
disappoint Gropius perhaps even more harshly than the painting masters. After all
design, and furniture design at that, was par excellence a Bauhaus activity, and Gropius
had not only admired and encouraged Breuer at the time of the latter's experimenting
with the evolution of various tubular chair prototypes, but had ordered large quantities
of these for the new Bauhaus building and for the masters' residences. And just when the
Bauhaus was concluding negotiations in Dresden for the marketing of these chairs,
Gropius found out that Breuer, who considered tubular furniture to be totally his own
intellectual property, had made prior arrangements with the Berlin firm of Standard-
Möbel Lengyel Co. In other words Breuer intended to market independently the furniture
series which, by his own admission, had been conceived and developed at the Bauhaus,
and had so many ties to the institution. He intended to market the series not as a Bauhaus
product designed by him, but as his own, independent design. He had conducted secret
negotiations with the Berlin firm, bringing Dr König, representing the Bauhaus in
Dresden, into a most embarrassing situation, for the latter had been basing the success of
his negotiations on the Breuer designs, which promised to be the most marketable and
commercially successful items.\footnote{15} When he was taken to task, Breuer replied: 'The chair
was not a Bauhaus product in the sense that a painting by Paul Klee was not a Bauhaus
product. [Klee's painting] was done in his own time and with his own money, in his own
workshop. To that extent it was not a Bauhaus product.'\footnote{16}

This way of thinking drove Gropius to despair, and with good cause. Breuer may have
been right about the facts - although these were much more applicable in Klee's case than
in regard to Breuer's furniture - however, his way of thinking meant that among the
leading intellectual lights of the Bauhaus there was not the least evidence of community
spirit, or even of a claim for such. Individual oeuvres were being constructed in parallel,
careers aimed at personal success, and the Bauhaus, from being the object of a collective
passion, paled into a service enterprise in the background, as far as the leading
personalities were involved. The isolation of Klee and Kandinsky, the manifest
individualism of Breuer, unequivocally demonstrated that the communality of
intellectual property was a mere pipedream. Gropius was forced to acknowledge this, and in response, as far as his administrative duties and his obligations as member in a great number of professional organizations allowed, he, too, began to give more time to his architectural practice. In 1926 he began negotiations with the Dutch architect Mart Stam for heading a department of architecture to be established at the Bauhaus. Although Stam was only 28 years old, Gropius looked to him as a possible successor. However, Stam did not accept the offer.

Meanwhile, work was proceeding on the construction of the Törten housing project near Dessau. The Junkers aircraft factory had supported the invitation of the Bauhaus to Dessau because it needed low-cost housing for its workers, and the concept of the new-style housing projects in general was of interest to the town. A site was at last purchased in the village of Törten along the highway to Leipzig, where the Bauhaus gave spectacular proof of the capabilities of perfectly coordinated organization. As a result of installing an on-site assembly line and the precise timing of work phases, in less than three months Gropius was able to deliver for occupancy the first two units completely equipped and furnished, at the same time as the new Bauhaus buildings were opened. In spite of a few flaws in design, the dwelling units were a tremendous achievement, and the enlargement of the Törten project went on until 1928.

It would appear that Gropius did not have any intention of directing the architecture workshop, for after Mart Stam's refusal he continued his search. The designs of a young Swiss architect, Hannes Meyer, aroused Gropius's interest, and he was invited for a meeting at the Bauhaus at the end of 1926. Meyer gave a talk at the Bauhaus on 21 December 1926, and was well received. Two designs by Meyer and his associate, Hans Wittwer, were also known: their projects for the Petersschule in Basel and for the League of Nations Palace in Geneva. Gropius found both of these noteworthy. According to his biographer, Reginald Isaacs, it was not primarily Meyer's qualifications as architect, but his social commitment that attracted Gropius. In 1926 Das Werk in Zurich published Meyer's personal manifesto, 'The New World', in which some of the Ideas and even a few sentences and turns of phrase literally recalled the writings of Gropius in his younger days. Meyer wrote: 'The new world of form is known by its lucid construction ... The artist's studio turns into a scientific laboratory, and his works are the results of a pointed manner of thought and inventiveness ... The new creation is a collective work, suitable for everyone, and not the object of art collections, not the privilege of a few.' Meyer, who was 37 years old at the time, represented a type of radicalism that Gropius had grown too exhausted to carry on. To him, Meyer could have meant a hope that there still existed a grandiloquent way of thinking that looked ahead into the future, far past individual interests. 'The New World' was in fact a programme-like statement - many of its sentences were reiterated by Meyer in later, actual programme declarations, and many of the ideas sketched out in it, in spite of the at times brutal wording, were pointing in the same direction as Gropius's ideas.

17 Gropius read Meyer’s new world-vision with obvious relish, and was indul¬gent towards its disturbing overtones. He must have been seduced by ideas and concepts resembling and occasionally surprisingly close to his own and Moholy-Nagy’s. He hired Meyer to head the department of architecture at the Bauhaus. In the curriculum vitae Meyer handed in at the time, he described himself as ‘politically unaligned’.24

18 Hannes Meyer joined the Bauhaus in April 1927. He moved in to share Oskar Schlemmer's house (while Schlemmer's family spent a year in Italy). This is how Schlemmer saw him at the time: 'Hannes Meyer is also here ... He obviously made a good impression, and one had the sense he could contribute something the Bauhaus needs... One motto of his work as an architect is: "organization of needs". But this is to be understood in the broadest sense, and certainly does not exclude spiritual needs. He said that what impressed him most here were the pictures (mine and Moholy's), not the rooms in which they were hung ... He was not interested in Klee, he says Klee must be in a perpetual trance; Feininger does not appeal to him, either. Kandinsky because of the theoretical underpinnings. In terms of character he feels closest to Moholy, although he is very critical towards much about him . . . Gropius can count himself fortunate to have this honest fellow as the latest feather In his cap.25

19 From the distance of nearly three decades this is how Gropius recalled Meyer: 'Meyer, when he arrived, seemed to be very cooperative and amiable, but he was the opposite of open-minded, extremely cautious, and nobody really knew him because he did not show his colours ... Since I was aware of the political difficulties of that time, I asked him point blank about his leanings, and he answered that he was politically entirely disinterested ... No indications of his leftish inclinations became apparent ... His work in that time was straightforward, and since I believe that as soon as a man has been appointed he should have his own way, I did not interfere.26 Meyer elaborated a system of architectural training, and he himself taught theory of architecture. He was primarily concerned with housing in relation to its environment: the house in its symbiosis with the surroundings and various functions, from fruit trees through health issues to traffic.27 'While Walter Gropius was still Bauhaus director, he had a chance to observe Hannes Meyer's activities at the school for almost a year, and there was nothing in Meyer's manner, statements or his work that suggested his inner turbulence or his political intent,'28 writes Reginald Isaacs.

20 In the meantime, attacks on the Bauhaus aimed at the person of Gropius continued at an increased intensity during 1927. These came from political opponents, commercial interests, and, as in Weimar, groups of academic artists. Satirical newspaper commentaries and cartoons ridiculing both Gropius and the school were published in the Dessau newspapers.29 Public opinion in Dessau clamoured that it had had enough of the 'extravagances of the new architectural style'.30 Gropius was most deeply offended by an assault made by Heinrich Peus, the publisher of the Dessau daily Dessauer Volksblatt. At a meeting Peus charged Gropius with obtaining an unfair honorarium for the construction of the Törten housing project, thus inciting the dissatisfied tenants' group against the architect. Gropius responded with unwonted sharpness and emotion. He wrote a letter to Peus demanding that it be published, then he personally went to the publisher’s office to effect a retraction of the libels. After leaving Peus's office he picked up that day's edition of the Volksblatt only to find another article containing a libellous attack on his person, signed by Peus. 'After leaving your office, I read your article in today's Volksblatt. After this, it becomes very difficult for me to give credence to your words.'31 Peus did not
publish Gropius’s letter, which he answered breezily: 'Dear Professor! I am too busy to answer. The first article was already set in type and was in page proof. It was too late. More later.'

21 According to Isaacs, on this day, Tuesday, 17 January 1928, Walter Gropius, after writing his second letter to Peus, informed the faculty that he would probably resign unless the *Voiksblatt* made a complete retraction of the charges and insinuations, accompanied by a public apology.

22 As an educational institution the Bauhaus was actually becoming more and more popular; about two hundred inquiries and applications for admission arrived each week. Moreover, its financial situation had improved notably, but the exacerbation of the political picture (the 1927 elections brought in a right-wing majority in Dessau, too) and the tone of the attacks against his person reinforced Gropius in his decision. During confidential discussions with Fritz Hesse, and in the official letter of resignation addressed to the mayor, Gropius designated Hannes Meyer as his successor as director of the Bauhaus. 'I realized that his decision was irrevocable,' wrote Fritz Hesse, who, according to Gropius’s biographer, must have felt relief at the prospect of from now on having to deal with, instead of the difficult Gropius, the tractable-seeming Meyer, who appeared more predictable to the bureaucrat's eye.

Dear Sir [wrote Gropius on 4 February 1928]

After careful consideration I have decided to leave the sphere of activity here, and request an opportunity to discuss with the magistracy an early termination of my contract. I would like from now on to be able to work and develop free from the restrictions of official duties and responsibilities, especially as my public commitments outside Dessau are steadily increasing. I am convinced that the Bauhaus today is strengthened, both inside and out, to the point where I can leave the future leadership of it, without detriment, to my co-workers who have been very close to me both personally and professionally. I intend, in close cooperation with the institute, and with the agreement of any former colleagues, to carry the ideas which have been developed in the Bauhaus into broader applications and to build foundations for them in outside practice. As my successor I propose Mr Hannes Meyer, the leader of our department of architecture, whom I deem capable, in his professional and personal qualifications, of leading the Institute to further successful development.

Yours respectfully,

Gropius

23 That afternoon Siegfried Giedion gave a guest lecture at the Bauhaus, and a dance was scheduled for the evening. However, the news of Gropius's decision was spreading fast, and it whipped up the emotions and anxieties of the students. 'The mood was so downcast that only after long pleading was Gropius able to get the students to continue their dance. But the situation gradually became so explosive that Fritz Kuhr stood up and delivered a long speech protesting against Gropius's resignation.' According to Schlemmer's description, 'Gropius was most cheerful. Towards three o'clock Andi sat down at the piano and sang his old Hungarian songs, and a melancholy mood set in.' This was the mood that compelled Kuhr to speak his mind. He said: 'Even though we haven't always agreed with you, and though you have often led us around by our noses, so to speak - we were fully aware of that - you are still our guarantee that the Bauhaus will not become a school. For the sake of an idea we have starved here in Dessau. You cannot leave now. If you do, the way will be opened for the reactionaries. Hannes Meyer may be quite a fine
fellow; I don't want to say anything against him. But Hannes Meyer as the Director of the Bauhaus is a catastrophe.  

Gropius attempted to say a few soothing words, but Kuhr had so carried away the audience - since he obviously spoke what weighed on everyone's mind - that 'finally Moholy brought himself to speak up for Meyer in order to prevent a general revolt.'  

Ise Gropius's observation is characteristic of the situation: 'Unfortunately, the students had gained the idea that Meyer had pushed Gropius out.'  

Moholy-Nagy, Herbert Bayer and Breuer also left the Bauhaus. Gropius and his wife left Dessau on 28 March, after a farewell evening organized in their honour.  

The historical experiences of the second half of the Twenties are embodied in Gropius's painful, exhausted act of resignation from the Bauhaus. The Bauhaus, apart from all of Gropius's personal ambitions, was an initiative towards a collective future, and only a faith in that future could provide the energies needed to fight its way through obstacles perceived as temporary at the time. Gropius's extraordinary sensitivity to historical change had enabled the Bauhaus to adapt itself with the biological certainty of a living organism to its rapidly changing environment; now this sensitivity signalled a new, alien type of danger. The affair that occurred between him and Peus could not have taken place in the culture that Gropius was born and raised in. Peus's behaviour had called Gropius's attention to an astounding shift in everyday realities: a respected artist-intellectual holding a high official position could be publicly insulted and dishonoured without anyone taking a stand by his side, without the Chief Mayor or his own colleagues demanding justice on his behalf. And without himself having any recourse to redress - without even the offending party agreeing to discuss the matter with him. We are not mistaken in judging this episode as pointing far beyond itself, and it is no accident that it took this perhaps in itself insignificant act of arrogance to impress upon Gropius the uselessness of writing another circular letter to ask for the support of German or European intellectuals. It was impossible not to see that Peus stood for the underworld that was in the process of coming into power. No matter in what manner he had to present this to himself, Gropius at last understood that the cause was no more. For his closest associates, or for Germany at large, it made little difference whether the Bauhaus would realize its idealistic aims. In the face of the rapidly advancing political right, a powerful left arose in a polarization of forces and emotions. (Even the otherwise moderately leftist weekly Die Weltbühne sought the collaboration of the Social Democrats.  

As for the arts, the slogan became Neue Sachlichkeit (‘New Objectivity’), the first exhibition of which was introduced by the following words: 'That which is shown here is simply this: the artists, who are disappointed, sobered, often resigned to the point of cynicism, and almost self-denying with the passage of those moments of boundless, nearly apocalyptic hopes, are now, in the midst of catastrophe, thinking in terms of what is most immediate, certain and permanent - truth and handiwork.'  

By leaving the Bauhaus, Gropius announced, for himself and for all the world to hear, that the age of belief was over. 'If it had been revealed to me in 1919 that I would have only nine years for this large-scale experiment, I don't think I would have embarked upon it,' he wrote in 1964. But he would have gone ahead anyway - even if Mephisto himself had been in charge of measuring out the time.
NOTES

3. Ibid.
4. Wassily Kandinsky, 'The Value of the Teaching of Theory in Painting'; in bauhaus. 1926/1; republished in Wingler, op. cit., p. 112.
5. Gropius, Letter to Ise Gropius, Dessau, September 1925; quoted by Isaacs, op. cit., p. 369.
6. See chapter 3, note 11.
7. See chapter 2, note 18.
8. Klee, Letter to Walter Gropius, 1 September 1926; in Isaacs, op. cit., p. 405; and in Wingler, op. cit., p. 120.
9. Gropius, Letter to Paul Klee, Dessau, 13 October 1926; in Isaacs, op. cit., p. 405-6; and in Wingler, op. cit., p. 120.
14. Ibid., p. 37: 'Breuer's most exciting experience during his first weeks at the relocated Bauhaus had nothing to do with artistic matters, but centered around purchasing his first bicycle, an Adler, and learning to ride it... Breuer was impressed by his bicycle's strength and lightness, the result of its being made of tubular steel. This seemingly indestructible material could be bent into handlebar shapes and could easily support the weight of one or two riders; why then could it not be used for furniture?'
15. Ibid., pp. 53-4.
16. Ibid., p. 40.
17. Gropius continued to be a member of the Arbeitsrat, as well of The Ring (of ten architects), and of several international societies.
18. Nerdinger, op. cit., p. 82.
19. Ibid.
22. Ibid.
23. Ibid.
27. Ibid., p. 139.
29. Ibid.
30. Ibid.
32. Ibid.
33. Ibid.
34. Hesse, op. cit., p. 229.
36. Fritz Kuhr was a young student of painting at the Bauhaus from 1923 to 1930.
37. Ise Gropius. 'Gropius Proclaims His Intention to Resign to the Students'; in Wingler, op. cit., p. 136.
40. Ise Gropius, op. cit.
41. Ibid.
42. Istvan Deak, op. cit., p. 155. This is probably why Die Weltbühne carried Kúllai's article 'Zehn Jahre Bauhaus' in April 1930 (pp. 135-9).
44. Gropius, Reply to Tomás Maldonado; in Ulm 9/10, 1964, p. 70.
Dear Mr Gropius,

As your former colleagues we greet you on the occasion of your honourary doctorate from the Technische Hochschule of Hanover. This appreciation of your pioneering work fills us with gladness and satisfaction, all the more so since we are aware of the tremendous odds you always had to fight against. The Bauhaus, as an institution dedicated to the development of both modern technical competence and the freedom of artistic imagination, owes its existence to you. Many years of your self-sacrificing labours are embodied in the school's spiritual and material foundations. In token of the memory of those rugged but beautiful years imbued by your personal contributions and the spirit of the collective, we have unanimously decided to elect you to the board of the Friends of the Bauhaus. We ask that you accept this membership as a sign of our affection.

In the name of the administration and Masters' Council [I] of the Dessau Bauhaus: Hannes Meyer, Wassily Kandinsky, Paul Klee, Lyonel Feininger, Oskar Schlemmer, Josef Albers, Hinnerk Scheper, Joost Schmidt, Gunta Stölzl, Werner Feist, Fritz Heinze.¹

1 This letter might lead us to believe that the harmony was complete: the new leadership picked up where the old left off.

2 And this was, in part, true. Several firms showed interest in the Bauhaus lamps; the Berlin firm of Schwintzer und Gräff alone purchased rights to the mass production and sale of 53 different light fixture models. The firm of Rasch in Bramsche bei Osnabrück turned Bauhaus wallpapers into the school's most profitable and famous product, manufactured to this day.² There was an abundance of orders for the advertising as well as for the printing workshops: the new Bauhaus-style typography was in demand for the packaging and advertisements of cigarettes, chocolates and shoes. Bauhaus textiles were acquired for the collections of the Grassi Museum in Leipzig, the Kunstgewerbe Museum in Chemnitz and the Lübeck Kunst-und Kulturgeschichte Museum. There was also increased interest in the non-commercial activities of the Bauhaus. Besides Kandinsky, Klee and Feininger, the younger Bauhaus painters Fritz Winter, Fritz Kuhr, Xanti Schawinsky and Lou Scheper also received invitations to prominent exhibitions. Oskar Schlemmer's stage workshop was invited for guest performances at, among others, the Dresden Staatsoper, the Berlin Volksbühne and the Breslau Stadttheater, and the Bauhaus band enjoyed great popularity.³
Meyer restructured the Bauhaus. He expanded the Preliminary Course to include classes by Kandinsky, Klee and Schlemmer. As was also done at the Moscow VKhUTEMAS institute in 1926, Meyer amalgamated the wood and metal workshops, and, throwing in the mural workshop as well, named the new unit Ausbauwerkstatt. As its director he appointed Alfred Arndt, who was brought to the Bauhaus specifically for this purpose. In 1929 he invited Walter Peterhans to head the newly established photography department. He reintroduced physical education, this time devoid of Itten's ideology, also adding courses in sociology, mathematics, biology, city planning, political science, psychology and economics. The training strove for scientific precision in every respect; Walter Peterhans, for instance, 'for three years taught photographic optics and chemistry to future photo-reporters and advertising photographers'.

The student enrollment increased, so that entrance requirements had to be made more stringent to keep the student population within the necessary limits. The Bauhaus travelling exhibition went to Basel, Breslau, Dessau, Essen, Mannheim and Zürich, popularizing the school's ideas and products, and the annual revenues - which had been about 128,000 marks - nearly doubled.

These facts would suggest that the Bauhaus did, in fact, fulfill its promise: within its walls chemistry and creative theatre work, painting and sociology, city planning and photography could coexist. If these various disciplines were to fuse in the persons and works of individual students, it would mean that a generation of creative people would graduate from the Bauhaus far better trained, more multifaceted and richer in imagination than those graduating from any other institute of higher education. In addition, the school had begun to establish contacts with the world at large.

In actuality, in spite of the facts indicating prosperity, the intellectual profile of the Bauhaus had diminished. It appears that the cause of this may be sought in Meyer's personality.

For Gropius the separation or unification of art and technology remained an eternal problem and, what is more, a mystery. It is well documented that his slogan announcing their 'new unity' did not resolve the issue for him. Even after specifying design as the chief function of the Bauhaus Gropius desisted from reducing the school to solely this dimension: he insisted on the occasional performance of music, and the continued presence of Klee, Kandinsky and Schlemmer. He had a multi-faceted concept of design itself: In planning an object or a building he considered the aesthetic qualities to be just as functional as technical aspects relating to utility. In Gropius's Bauhaus if an object failed to meet certain aesthetic standards it would not be considered usable. This was not spelled out in any programme; it was simply the case. Even though the painters were relegated to the background, their mere presence provided that opposite pole so essential for the tension needed for creative work.

Meyer, on the other hand, refused to recognize problems. His way of thinking and approach as a designer was characterized by a fanatical reductivism. He was not the least bit concerned with art. Meyer considered art, and all those Intellectual and creative aspects that would have been the contribution of single, gifted individuals to the collective work, to be superfluous and even confusing. 'Art is merely order,' he would eventually declare, and it was precisely this reduction to a single dimension that brought about the changes at the Bauhaus. The objective of design now became equated with quantitative increment: providing millions with various objects. Its ideology became a
feeling of social consciousness that would motivate further quantitative leaps in production leading to supplying the needs of millions. This also became a moral basis, making it seem natural, and consistent with its inner logic, that activities that produce nothing usable by the broad masses should be considered immoral and superfluous. Above all, the Isolation of painting within the Bauhaus expressed this scornful attitude. Perhaps Meyer simply did not dare to dismiss professors of the calibre of Klee or Kandinsky, but he emphatically isolated them, along with their work. Ernő Kállai wrote in 1929: 'The painting of the Bauhaus (Feininger, Kandinsky, Klee, Schlemmer) is totally separated from the school’s practical shop work. It had been one of the boldest illusions of the Weimar period that these painters would take part in such shop activities - unless we consider their influence on the weaving workshop as evidence of participation. Even this influence ceased some time ago, so that in a creative sense the paintings of Feininger, Kandinsky, Klee and Schlemmer have not the slightest effect on other aspects of the Bauhaus today. Likewise, we cannot find the least contact between the works of the autonomous school of painting (Kandinsky and Klee’s students) and the architecture and design of the Bauhaus workshops. In several writings Kállai emphasized the absurdity of this situation; these warning signs, however, did not sway Meyer’s position. 'But painting goes on at the Bauhaus in spite of the isolation. There is quite a large number of young painters at the Bauhaus, including some who are not enrolled in the painting department but are members of other workshops. We must take it as incontrovertible evidence of the need for the discharging and balancing of psychic tensions that painters persevere in their definitely unrewarding efforts, even in this hostile atmosphere. Painting is capable of tapping those deepest sources of humanity and revealing those emotive values that are indispensable precisely here, amid the rationalistic squeeze of the Bauhaus’s architectural and goal-oriented discipline.'

9 Meyer was born in 1889 in Basel, and was raised in an orphanage after losing his father, also an architect, at the age of ten. In an atmosphere of cold terror, despair made him turn to studying, as he stated in an autobiographical sketch. Winfried Nerdinger aptly observes that planning living spaces for the warmth of the family environment or for the similar intimacy of a small community is a theme running throughout Meyer’s architectural career. Appropriately enough, his final project was a children’s home in Mümliswil, Switzerland. Meyer was always in search of community, a safe haven in the midst of the frailty of human relations. Perhaps he felt most secure in a community that was held together more by principles and solid rules than by the contingencies of unpredictable human emotions. Nerdinger’s insight is reinforced by the fact that all his life Meyer was attracted to external regulations that held compulsive sway, and was inclined to place his faith in the implacability of dogmas rather than giving in to internal impulses and emotions. Perhaps this accounts for his preference of scientific methods; for him, objectivity and the elimination of contingencies depending on the personality meant a sense of security and peace.

10 Meyer was attracted to architectural collectives and to left-wing, international architectural circles, such as the coterie of the periodical ABC in Switzerland. In 1923 he travelled to Scandinavia to study the cooperative movement, and in 1924 he spent six months in Belgium designing the Swiss pavilion at the international cooperative exhibition. He also organized and directed a small propaganda theatre, the Theater Co-op, where two life-sized marionettes and two actors communicated the advantages of the
cooperative way of life. Meyer experimented with live propaganda as an exhibition genre in place of 'sterile exhibition stands'.

It would appear that Meyer consistently interpreted every architectural and social problem in terms of a denial of the individuum and an affirmation of the collective as the modern way of life. In the 1926 treatise, 'The New World', he celebrated the internationality of science, technology, sports and Esperanto, and the institutions of labour unions, cooperatives, corporations, cartels, trusts and the League of Nations, all of which demonstrate that 'the community rules over the Individual'. But Meyer went beyond this; he wrote: 'The novel is dead; we have no confidence in it or the time to read it. Painting and sculpture are dead as images of the real world; in the age of cinema and photography both are a sheer waste of energy ... The creative opus as an "autonomous entity", as "l'art pour l'art" is dead: our communal conscience will not tolerate any individualistic disruption of order.

Meyer's most Important commissions were all executed for the above organizations. Following the Co-op Pavilion he and his associate Hans Wittwer collaborated on designing the Constructivist building of the Petersschule in Basel; in the same year their entry in the competition for the League of Nations Palace in Geneva shared one of the first prizes. In 1929 Meyer's design was utilized when the residential school of ADGB, the German labour union organization, was built at Bemau, near Berlin.

Almost from the beginning Hannes Meyer felt himself in a constrained and awkward position at the Bauhaus. He considered Dessau boring and lifeless; he wrote: 'what I absolutely miss here is contact with the others.' He felt it most disturbing that 'Gropius totally isolates himself from me. We do not have the least understanding of each other. Too bad, but it cannot be changed.' Meyer, whose entire life had been an unending series of moves, again had to face the question of whether to move again. However, when Gropius's resignation suddenly opened up new possibilities for him, he accepted the appointment as director and went to work with renewed energy. He believed the majority of the masters to be on his side. 'I feel identified with the students and the majority of the masters, in forming a united front categorically opposed to the hitherto reigning fraudulent-commercial-theatrical Bauhaus image,' he wrote in a letter to Adolf Behne, without specifying those who agreed with him in such an evaluation of the school. He wrote to the ideologically related fellow architects Mart Stam and J.J.P. Oud, offering them positions at the Bauhaus. However, in his appeal to the latter, he already used language such as 'although I wish better opportunities for your talents and abilities than that available here in dessau [sic]'. In 1929 he also invited Willi Baumeister, Karel Teige and Piet Zwaart to teach at the Bauhaus.

Therefore it is not surprising that Meyer's programme, published under the title 'building' in the 1928/4 issue of the periodical bauhaus, in line with Meyer's conditioning, focuses on universal principles instead of defining concrete objectives for the Bauhaus.

His philosophy is summed up by this programmatic statement, its militant sentences resembling Mayakovsky's energy in their abandonment of the simple declarative mode in favour of manifesto-like exclamations and questions, and preference for the imperative mood:
all things in this world are a product of the formula: (function times economy)
all these things are, therefore, not works of art.
all art is composition and, hence, is unsuited to achieve goals.
all life is function and is therefore unartistic.
the idea of a 'composition of a harbour' is hilarious!
but how is a town plan designed? or a plan of a dwelling? composition or function?
art or life?????
building is a biological process, building is not an aesthetic process. In its design the
new dwelling becomes not only a 'machine for living', but also a biological
apparatus serving the needs of body and mind, the new age provides new building
materials for the new way of building houses:

we organize these building materials into a constructive whole based on economic
principles, thus the individual shape, the body of the structure, the colour of the
material and the surface texture evolve by themselves and are determined by life,
snugness and prestige are not leitmotifs for dwelling construction.)...
architecture as 'an emotional act of the artist' has no justification ...
this functional, biological interpretation of architecture as giving shape to the
functions of life logically leads to pure construction: this world of constructive forms knows no native country, it is the expression of an International attitude in architecture ... pure construction is the basis and the characteristic of the new world of forms.

1. sex life
2. sleeping habits
3. Pets
4. Gardening
5. personal hygiene
6. weather protection
7. hygiene In the home
8. car maintenance
9. Cooking
10. Heating
11. Sunlight
12. Service

these are the only motives when building a house ...
the new house is a prefabricated building for site assembly; as such. It is an industrial product and the work of a variety of specialists: economists, statisticians, hygienists, climatologists, industrial engineers, standardization experts, heating engineers ... and the architect? ... he was an artist and now becomes a specialist in organization! the new house is a social enterprise...
building is the deliberate organisation of the processes of life, building as technical process is therefore only one part of the whole process, the functional diagram and the economic programme are the determining principles of the building project.
building is no longer an individual task for the realization of architectural ambitions.
building is the communal effort of craftsmen and inventors, only he who, as a master in the working community of others, masters life itself ... is a master builder.
building then grows (rom an individual affair of individuals (promoted by unemployment and the housing shortage), into a collective affair of the whole nation.

building is nothing but organization:
social, technical, economical, psychological organization. (Emphasis added.)

This fanatical functionalism was merely one side of Hannes Meyer's ideological activities.
He employed this same ideology based on a restricted vocabulary in his campaign against Gropius's activities as architect and director of the Bauhaus. In this passionate struggle that permeated his entire tenure as director his number one aide, at the outset, was the Hungarian art critic Ernő Kállai. After his appointment in 1928 Meyer invited Kállai to an editorial position on the periodical bauhaus. But documents indicate that Kállai's role was greater than that: he wrote the introduction to the catalogue of the Bauhaus travelling exhibition, and he made use of every possible forum to popularize the Bauhaus of Hannes Meyer.

Above all Meyer attacked Gropius's 'aestheticism'. In actuality he was attacking in his architectural oeuvre the quality that constituted Gropius's advantage over him, both as a human being and as Bauhaus director: complexity. Meyer demanded unconditional simplicity and linearity in both thought and architecture. Gropius's functionalism included both a fascination with the potentials of modernism, the delight in the luxurious elegance provided by new materials and the grand momentum of streamlined design. Meyer, obeying the basic principles of a disciplined functionalism to the letter, countered by somewhat dogmatically labelling this approach as 'formalism'. It was true that Gropius
had a tendency to place the symbols of modernism above mere functional considerations, as may be seen in the glass wall of the main building of the Dessau Bauhaus. However, by doing so, he came closer to a fulfilment of the psychic needs associated with the building than did Meyer, whose scientific approach to psychological approximation led to such results as the rigidly immovable installation of furniture in parallel arrays (intended to arouse 'comradely feelings') in the dormitories of the ADGB school.  

Meyer, in his article, building, rattled off the staccato cadence of new materials and technologies, as if, by flaunting his widespread mastery of up-to-date information, he meant to surpass the professionalism of Gropius, who never worded statements with such scientific precision. At the same time, Meyer was taking aim at Gropius’s ulterior motives and underlying attitudes, by trying to prove that the same forms which were, according to him, employed in an ethical manner only by the new architecture, were used by Gropius as meaningless, empty phrases. In an article Kállai sent home to Lajos Kassák, he wrote: 'Current opinion has it that with the horizontal-vertical arrangements of straight lines, cubes, windowed corners and flat roofs, we have triumphed over everything else. With these, modernism has been rendered its due, and everything else may remain as before, and the world can go on as if nothing had happened.'  

Kállai shared Meyer's view, according to which Gropius was a false prophet who turned the holiest of causes - progressive, socially committed, industrially based architecture - into a superficial modernist joke, and was therefore the most dangerous enemy of the architecture that was truly in the service of society, for he had deceitfully co-opted its honourable vocabulary and means of expression.

18 Kállai wrote:

Gropius’s fanatical intellectualism has divested the architectural concept of every humanistic factor. Therefore he considered the design studio more as a technical training ground than as an educational cooperative. Gropius builds in the economic and technological spirit typical of industrialism, and even the luxurious aesthetic fads that here and there press into the foreground of some of his projects play games with industrial materials and structures. In Gropius’s industrial conception of architecture the idea of the house as a mass-produced item becomes a purely mathematical factor, and in spite of all of its aesthetic concomitants it retains the character of an, albeit stylish and witty, but nonetheless cold and harsh, calculation... The principles of large-scale production reign supreme, and these principles, wrapped in all the rational and technological armour of up-to-date social hygiene and comfort, ultimately still lead to one thing: the warehousing of the homeless or slum-confined masses in a relatively cheap, speedy and summary manner.

19 Kállai, who saw eye to eye with Meyer, was obviously making awkward efforts to sever Gropius, as architect and socially responsible creator, from the platform of architectural theory and practice he shared with Meyer. As opposed to Gropius’s 'fanatical intellectualism', Kállai posits Meyer’s superior attention to psychological and biological factors, even though he cannot point out how these theories are carried out in actual practice - what, if any, are these superior values in the buildings themselves. He writes:

We have not fulfilled the requirements of modern engineering ingenuity by merely mass-producing our houses. The simplest industrial machine is capable of creating inferior products. The issue is what and how much we demand of the machine-made product regarding function. But the majority of architects demanding the rationalization of construction reduce this programme into an overly simplified and narrow formula, insofar as they fail to consider the organic arrangement along geographic and social criteria, the material and objective potentials of the natural
environment and the notion of settlements unified by more intimate and human relationships.  

20 Kallai and Meyer, even by mustering all their arsenal, could not come up with anything more substantial than sheer demagoguery against Gropius - or more precisely, the phantom of Gropius. Empty words, to emphasize that not Gropius, but Meyer was the sole true representative of modern architecture in the collective spirit.

Not only with respect to the Bauhaus, but regarding all of modern architecture, Hannes Meyer deems it necessary to state that this architecture is threatened by the dangers of formalism ... Hannes Meyer belongs to that hitherto small group of modern architects who consider industrial rationalism and technological constructivism as mere subservient means to an incomparably higher idea, that of a socio-psychologically oriented organization ... Gropius is an architect whose primary calling is the design of industrial, technological and administrative objectives, while Hannes Meyer's entire mentality as an architect is rooted in the notion of the social collective and the harmonious self-government of a cooperative lifestyle. As opposed to the intellectually and aesthetically Constructivist aims of his predecessor, Hannes Meyer's architectural perspectives are more general, more profound. They are the architectonic applications of an entire worldview incorporating cultural politics and a philosophy of life.

21 All along, among the various left-wing art movements Ideological debates had raged about defining 'true' Constructivism, 'true' functionalism or 'true' social commitment. As early as 1923 Kallai directed a polemical essay at De Stijl, labelling its activities as exclusive Constructivism, and by doing so, he judged De Stijl to be separate from the main international thrust of the movement El Lissitzky also made ironic references to Constructivism as a fashion phenomenon. A most significant element of these debates was the desire to create a grand new international style while at the same time style itself was denounced as a historically invalid category. Naturally a style was demanded, since they endeavoured to create the emblematic forms valid for the new age, but the word style itself was for them associated with a historical era that they strove to dismiss. In the early, passionate days the members of the Bauhaus grouped together precisely for the creation of this grand new style, but by the end of the 1920s they came to reject the very notion of a 'Bauhaus style' in exasperation. The left-wing artists wanted to create a valid and lasting art while paradoxically wanting to bring about the end of art itself, in the forms in which it had existed till then.

22 Kallai, in a temporary fit of historical short-sightedness, relived the Constructivist visions of the early 1920s, and chose to believe Hannes Meyer's claim that there was still actual life in the idea of a socialist-communist egalitarian society.

23 There is an unavoidable irony in the situation. After Gropius, the scion of an upper middle-class family with deep roots in German intellectual and architectural tradition, and with personal contacts extending all over Europe, in spite of all of his sophisticated attempts, had failed to have the Bauhaus accepted at Weimar and Dessau, a Swiss architect and a Hungarian art critic managed to muster the courage and faith to promote the despised and alien teachings of international Constructivism and Marxism in a Germany on the eve of Hitler's accession. In addition, in a Dessau already permeated by the political right, voicing such views endangered the Bauhaus's survival.

24 Of all people, Kallai should have known best that the faith and ideology of Constructivism could not be revived. The arrival of the 'twilight of ideologies' set in motion a process that resulted in the absorption of the Constructivist formal vocabulary into the public
domain of everyday material culture. Such an integration was promoted by the artists themselves: the abstract geometrical motifs and the new typography, as emblems of a progressive faith forced to go underground, now circulated as a new, ritualistic but marketed ornamentation in everyday use. It was advertising especially that offered plentiful opportunities for recharging the depleted Constructivist formal vocabulary with a new actuality. The advertising prospectus of a department store, with its well designed typography, its clear, easily legible lettering and the light/dark spatial differentiations of the paper's surface offers a calm and simple object that inspires more trust and confidence than any individualistic, artsy endeavour,' wrote Lajos Kassák, a witness and participant of this process of integration, in 1926. The advertisement is applied art, the advertising artist is a social creator,' he added. Meanwhile the former Constructivist artists advertised, employing a Constructivist formal language, the rubber tyres, shoe soles and candies of manufacturers whose consumer world was the original target of Constructivism. And they were doing this, as witnessed by Kassak's words (which would have been endorsed by Hannes Meyer), in the belief that as innovative social creators they had transcended the bourgeois, historically superannuated dimensions of individualism. The Bauhaus attempted, unsuccessfully, to resist this state of affairs; as Kállai wrote in the periodical bauhaus: 'but neither can our ultimate aim be the obedient service of industrial enterprise'. However, when Hannes Meyer summed up his achievements at the Bauhaus, he still mentioned the increase in industrial orders as his greatest triumph.

The crowning piece of Meyer's ideological work is his free-form poem written in 1929, 'bauhaus and society', in which he expressed a new Bauhaus manifesto. Paradoxically, in spite of Meyer's anti-capitalist beliefs, his denial and rejection of German society, this new programme defines the meaning and ultimate aim of the Bauhaus's existence as eventual integration into society:

the dessau bauhaus is not an artistic
but a true social phenomenon.
our work is the creation of form,
therefore society determines it.
our worksphere is ordained by society.
does not our german society today demand
a thousand schools, parks, buildings for the people?
a hundred thousand apartments for the people?
a million pieces of furniture for the people?
(what use are the experts twittering about
the cubicist cubes of bauhaus objectivity?)
and so we consider as a given
our society's
structure and needs,
we demand
the greatest attention to the people's life
the greatest insight into the people's soul
the greatest familiarity with the people's community.
as designers
we are the servants of this community:
whatever we do serves the people.
all of life is a striving after harmony,
it is called growth,
the striving for harmonious consumption of
oxygen + carbon + sugar + starch + protein,
it is called work,
our striving for a harmonious form of life,
we are not after
bauhaus style or bauhaus fashion.
nor after fashionably flat ornamentation
nor horizontal-vertical neo-plasticity.
we are not after
geometric or stereometric representation
that is counter to life and function.
we are not in timbuctoo:
our design is not dictated by
rhythm or hierarchy.
we despise all forms
that prostitute themselves into formalism.
thus the aim of all bauhaus work
is the unification of all life-giving forces
for the harmonious shaping of our society.
we bauhaus people are researchers:
we are searching for the harmonious opus,
the result of conscious organisation
of spiritual and psychic powers
... thus our work
points towards the collective
and demonstrates the worldview
of the broad masses of people.
art?
all art is order.
...art is no cosmetic device
art is not effect-mongering
art is merely order.
... art has always been merely order,
today all we can expect from art
is knowledge of a new objective order
valid for all,
the manifesto and means of a collective society.
thus the study of art
will aim at the system of law and order
and be indispensable for all designers.
thus art
will not be a profession,
but the vocation of creating order.
thus bauhaus art
will be the experimental means of objective order,
... it will scorn
the apleike excitability called talent,
scorn the perils of intellectual sectarianism,
inbreeding, egocentricity, alienation from life, from the world."

It is difficult to resist the temptation to compare this last manifesto of the Bauhaus with
the first one. This is not only because of the identical phrasings, such as 'art as a
profession', which is discarded by Gropius only in the democratic practice of crafts, since
'by the grace of heaven' anyone may become an artist, whereas Hannes Meyer rejects the
notion because in his visionary world there will no longer be any art (only order) to be
taken up professionally. It is also worthwhile to compare the atmosphere and the overtone of these manifestos.

27 Gropius calls for a single great effort, a heroic, symbolic gesture elevating the undertaker as a participant in a project that would 'rise towards heaven like the crystal symbol of a new faith'. In contrast, Meyer's call summons to a task more suitable for ants than for heroes; the diligent manufacture of a million pieces of furniture and a hundred thousand apartments for the people. For the accomplishment of this task, he prescribes the harmonious consumption of 'oxygen + carbon + sugar + starch + protein'. As if he was an avatar of political correctness, Meyer opened the doors of the Bauhaus for students without talent: 'The Bauhaus . . . does not intend to be an arbiter of talent ... but aims to absorb the greatest possible number of young people to enable them to find their proper place in society.'

The first manifesto is one loud shout: Look towards the future! 'Let us desire, conceive, and create!' Whereas Meyer's manifesto aimlessly shuffles in the present, rattling off in a monotone all those duties that fall as the Bauhaus members' lot; they are here, after all, to perform a service, their tasks are 'ordained by society'. The upper dimension of Gropius's horizon is unlimited; Meyer on the other hand declares that 'we are not in timbuctoo'. Naturally we are dealing here not only with the personal differences between Gropius and Meyer. Rather, it is a matter of observing the landing place of the thought-rocket launched by Gropius in 1919, at a time of upwardly mobile ideas. It would appear that Meyer's drama consisted of his misreading of the historical moment: in art, considering as a triumph the downgrading/absorption/fashion of Constructivist forms. As for politics, he interpreted the intermezzo of vigorous polarization, the euphoria of the extreme left in its reaction to the advances of the extreme right, as an actual historical opportunity. The issue is not which man was ultimately justified by history - for it was neither - but the fact that Gropius's manifesto is historically plausible, for it was adequate to the given historical moment, whereas Meyer's manifesto lacks credibility, for at the place and time of its publication it was invalid as a programme. The call for a collective society, the militant emphasis on the values of the political left that was already nearly outlawed within a venomously hostile right-wing milieu is a sign of an incorrigible lack of historical sense. Such a pointed stand in a politically polarized situation could pass for political heroism, but was not a viable programme for a director responsible for the school's survival. Meyer had no comprehension of the complex strategies Gropius had evolved to keep the Bauhaus afloat, nor did he seem to be willing to master his predecessor's forte, the art of navigating hostile waters.

Against this harsh evaluation it could be argued that, because of the polarization of political forces, diplomacy's sphere of action was greatly diminished. It could even be said that there is a limit to compromise, and that in a sharply right-wing environment survival at the cost of accepting certain political dictates is no longer a desideratum. However, Meyer was responsible for keeping alive an innovative, apolitical ideal, as well as maintaining the educational and work opportunities of the students. Therefore he could, by rights, be expected to soft-pedal the conflicts and insist on a Gropius-like apoliticality, instead of, on the contrary, provoking the wrath of political powers. And Mies van der Rohe's Bauhaus proves that there was still time.

At the Bauhaus a mimeographed monthly made its appearance, entitled Bauhaus - the Organ of Communist Students at the Bauhaus and featuring militant articles sharply opposing the right wing and the fascists. These populist-Marxist pamphlets took a courageous
stand, but their appearance within the walls of the Bauhaus was a suicidal gesture. A minimal amount of sober reflection should have made anyone realize that in a town dominated by the Junkers airplane factory such a political mode would not be tolerated. It was not possible to take seriously both this militant leftism and the practical, apolitical aspect of Meyer's programme outlining design work aimed at fulfilling society's needs. The programme calling for 'a thousand schools', 'a hundred thousand apartments' and 'a million pieces of furniture' for the people already sounded perilously close to the radical lower middle-class ideology of the Nazis, whose every word began with Volks-. Meyer should have realized the importance Gropius placed on avoiding politics, on neutral design work, and the significance of this neutrality in maintaining the Bauhaus as a high-level, intellectually independent workshop whose autonomy could not be legally infringed.

Thus Meyer's activities necessarily hastened his fall. In May 1929 Chief Mayor Hesse was still able to muster the slight majority of votes needed to extend the contracts of the Bauhaus professors until 1935. But Hesse himself was astonished by the large number of votes for the right: 'Even my municipal building councillor!' as he remarked later. Soon, however, he had a visit from Dr Ludwig Grote, state supervisor of monuments and close friend of Kandinsky, to report that serious political problems beset the Bauhaus: there was communist agitation going on among the students. The Bauhaus faculty was extremely concerned about this, and their anxiety was aggravated by the fact that Hannes Meyer, ignoring the school's apolitical tradition, did nothing to prohibit intramural political activity. Hesse wrote in his memoirs: 'Personally I never doubted Meyer's loyalty; in the course of our numerous conversations my impression was that he was politically neutral. I recalled that once he asked me if communists were allowed to study at the Bauhaus, and I replied that we were not in the habit of examining the students' political attitudes. I added that naturally they could not engage in politics within the school's walls. This question made me somewhat uneasy, but I dispelled my doubts by recalling that Meyer was Swiss, and therefore rather unfamiliar with the German political situation.' Dr Grote, however, did not share this view, and therefore Hesse asked Meyer to see him, whereupon the latter admitted that there was left-wing political activity at the Bauhaus. He stated that he was aware of the dangers this posed, and would do everything in his power to eliminate these tendencies. Hesse writes: 'We agreed that he would emphatically remind the students that there was no room for politics within the school. Since Meyer still had my confidence I did not think it strange that he asked me to put this in writing, as it would be more effective that way.' Soon Hesse received word that instead of improving, the situation at the Bauhaus was worse, and Hannes Meyer was making no efforts to curb the communist students. 'Dr Grote told me that Kandinsky assured him the Bauhaus masters were looking on in helpless despair at these developments which further aggravated the already impaired student-faculty relations, endangering the effectiveness of instruction.' Hesse, who had received similar news from other sources as well, chose the course of speedy action: one afternoon he and Dr Grote paid an unannounced visit at Meyer's office. 'Dr Grote, having had enough of aimless verbiage, interrupted Meyer, addressing him with an emotional voice: "Hannes Meyer, I believe you have misled us." Hannes Meyer immediately understood what the charge was about, and, putting aside the caution that characterized all of our earlier conversations, replied instantly: "But Dr Grote, you know perfectly well that I am a theoretical Marxist."
It was obvious that Meyer could no longer remain at the Bauhaus. As Hesse puts it: 'The parties supporting the Bauhaus would not have voted a single pfennig for a communist-led school.' Meyer felt that he had been treacherously stabbed in the back. According to his article 'My Expulsion from the Bauhaus' he did not in the least anticipate that his Marxist views would make it impossible for him to stay on at the Bauhaus. The question still remains: why, then, did he hide these views? The injured tone of his letter to Hesse betrays a naivety (or pseudo-naivety) as he lists his merits in making the Bauhaus so successful. He in fact took more than his share of the credit, at the expense of the Gropius-directed Bauhaus; and these claims were later answered, possibly by Gropius himself. It is evidence of Meyer's peculiar style of argumentation that he claims credit for using the improved financial situation of the Bauhaus to enable 'proletarians to attend the Bauhaus', for 'after all the time had come for the Bauhaus to be proletarianized'. At the end of his letter, he complains to Hesse: 'Down with Marxism! And for this purpose who should you have chosen but Mies van der Rohe, who designed the memorial for Karl Liebknecht and Red Rosie [sic]? This last emotional outburst reveals how poorly Meyer understood the German political picture. He was unaware that Mies van der Rohe could afford to design the Liebknecht-Luxemburg memorial, just as Gropius had got away with his Märzgefallene memorial in Weimar, for his social and professional rank and qualifications were decided by other criteria.

It was precisely the communist newspaper, Die Rote Fahne, that protested against the appointment of Mies van der Rohe, stressing that in spite of the memorial, Mies was no Marxist, but a reactionary. In short, one had to think in terms of far more complex relations, reaching into both the present and the past, than Meyer did, as witnessed by his writings.

The recent literature on Meyer has attempted to re-evaluate the events to yield a more nuanced image of the man. Gropius himself, repeatedly provoked by Meyer's comments about him both during and after Meyer's tenure as director, personally considered him a definite disappointment, although he would always add that there was nothing exceptionable about his work as an architect. In 1964 Tomas Maldonado and Gropius engaged in a debate about Meyer's evaluation. According to Maldonado, at the end of the 1920s it was impossible to consider the social aspects of art without a concrete political commitment, and a politically neutral position, as Mies van der Rohe's tenure demonstrated, was only possible at the cost of abandoning the Bauhaus's progressive tenets. Maldonado credits Meyer with refusing to choose this route, for 'subsequently it was shown how narrow the path was amid the political and ideological pressures ruling Germany in those days.' As opposed to this view, Gropius voiced his belief that party politics were a private affair that need not be involved in the social aspects of creative work, especially in the Germany of the late 1920s. Maldonado asked Gropius if it was true that originally he had had a high opinion of Meyer, then came to view him more critically, yet still recommended him as his successor, only later changing his opinion radically. Gropius replied that he had acted in perfectly good faith, for whenever they talked about keeping the Bauhaus free of politics Meyer was as ardently for this as himself.

After his appointment, he dropped his mask. His political materialist views, which he had kept hidden from us, undermined the Bauhaus idea, set the institute on a course between Scylla and Charybdis, and ended by ruining himself. I don't in the least agree with your view that he could not have done otherwise given the circumstances. Not at all!... Meyer imperilled the Bauhaus not so much because of
his political idealism but as a result of a lack of political instinct, making him incapable of the balancing act between practical work and political theory ... His strategy and tactics were too pedestrian: he was essentially a radicalized petty bourgeois. The culmination of his philosophy was the observation that 'life equals oxygen plus sugar plus starch plus protein', to which Mies promptly replied: if you try to mix them together, you'll get something that stinks.\[51\]

One of the nagging questions concerning Hannes Meyer remains to this day: did he consciously mislead Gropius? According to Nerdinger, Meyer became an actual Marxist, and eventually a Stalinist, only after his Bauhaus years.\[52\] On the other hand Philip Tolziner's memoir mentions that, although guest lecturers at the institute were always announced in the periodical \textit{bauhaus}, this was not done for the visit of Professor Ludwig from Moscow, whose talk was not given at the school auditorium but in Meyer's private apartment, suggesting a certain amount of political conspiracy.\[53\] Magdalena Droste correctly points out that even though Meyer espoused Marxism, he did not use the Marxist terminology of his day: he spoke of the \textit{people} instead of the \textit{proletariat}, and made no mention of \textit{class} or the \textit{bourgeoisie}.\[54\] At the same time he tolerated, in a supportive way, the communist organization within the Bauhaus, even though this was unquestionably party-politics: the number of students in this communist cell rose from 7 in 1927 to 36 in 1930.\[55\] Still, Meyer's leftism smacked of a defiant naivety: it seems as if this gradual slide towards the left had been his response to the resistance he had to face within the Bauhaus on the part of Kandinsky and the artists, as well as to the local and nationwide shift to the right. His open letter to Mayor Hesse hints at the dual nature of the pressures on him, even though he does not mention the Bauhaus artists: 'you and I both worried about the ominous politicization of the Bauhaus. But while to you it seemed the danger originated at the Bauhaus, I perceived the threat as coming from the outside.'\[56\] Meyer's naivety is also indicated in a letter written by Margret Mengel about Meyer's dismissal, to her friend, Meyer's companion Lotte Beese, who was working in Prague at the time: 'they accuse him of engaging in party politics, communist of course; they bring up his marxist education, his stand vis-à-vis art, that is, his intention to rid the bauhaus of art, as a final argument, they brought up his financial contribution to the children of the striking miners of mansfeld, the communist students circulated a subscription list, whereupon hannes generously signed up his contribution, as he saw fit it all seems like such an absurdity.'\[57\]

Many people conclude that Meyer was definitely a communist from the fact that after his dismissal from the Bauhaus he went, with a group of his students, to work in the Soviet Union. But it seems that Meyer's inclinations, together with all that happened to him, gradually led to his 'escaping forward' (as Nerdinger puts it),\[58\] or, in his own words: to choose the path of 'escaping into life'.\[59\] Meyer did not end up in Moscow as a result of any clandestine communist contacts. In August 1930 he wrote to Lissitzky:

\begin{quote}
I am already at work on my future: I have visited the russian trade delegation and the embassy, where they showed great sympathy for my situation, in both places they thought i should travel to moscow In September to prepare the ground there for both myself and the bauhaus collective through negotiating contracts... i was never as certain as i am right now that at the present time we have nothing to accomplish in western europe. the paths of intellectuals diverge; even paul klee says that he thinks his road leads "to the west" and mine "to the east" ... i cannot tell you how happy i am to emerge so blamelessly from my ambiguous dessau position.\[60\]
\end{quote}
In the autumn of 1930 Meyer travelled to Moscow, accompanied by Béla Scheffler, a Hungarian who knew Russian, and on 22 October he was already giving a lecture about the reactionary developments at German universities to an audience of 800 at the Hall of Unions. Meyer received an appointment at the State Architectural University (VASI), where on 3 November he lectured to an audience of 500 university students and faculty about the work of the Bauhaus. At this university he organized an exhibition he called 'The Dismantled Bauhaus'. At the outset Meyer was perfectly satisfied; 'I don't understand why I haven't been living here since 1917', he wrote for the 8as/er Vorwärts at the end of November. By this time Meyer found himself at GLAVPROMKADR, the centre of technical-industrial planning, making his students' travel possible. This was no simple matter; in addition to Meyer's outstanding work, the well-known journalist, Mikhail Kozlov, also offered significant help. By February 1931 seven former Bauhaus members (Bela Scheffler, Anton Urban, Rene Mensch, Klaus Meumann, Konrad Puschel, Philip Tolziner and Tibor Weiner) had joined Meyer in Moscow, calling themselves the Red Bauhaus Brigade, or Red Front for short. Around this time the Soviet Union welcomed highly trained foreign technical experts; the Bauhaus Brigade was employed by GIPROVTUS (State Institute for Planning Technical Universities).

In the summer of 1931 Meyer organized an exhibition consisting of about 140 drawings, graphics, photos, and about 40 original objects (chiefly textile pattern samples) at the Moscow gallery of the Federal Institute of Cultural Relations (VOKS). In September of the same year the exhibition travelled to Kharkov in the Ukraine. The title of the exhibition was 'Bauhaus Dessau - Hannes Meyer's Directorship (1928-1930)' and it was received with reservations both by the viewing public and the qualified expert/official sector. The former objected because they did not receive the images of the Bauhaus they had expected; the latter because they read the struggles of the Bauhaus as further evidence that 'within the framework of bourgeois art' it was impossible to break out of capitalist domination. Walter Gropius's school aestheticizes technology, Hannes Meyer's discovers technology and turns against all aestheticization,' wrote Mordvinov, whose critique of Meyer was the same as the latter's regarding Gropius: 'Hannes Meyer's school lacks social-ideological relevance ... his methods are mechanical.'

Meyer spent six years in the Soviet Union. In Moscow he received such highly significant assignments as the city-planning project for metropolitan Moscow; he was also commissioned for the city planning of the Jewish Autonomous region of Birobidzhan by the banks of the Amur. Along with so many other projects of this era, Meyer's designs remained on paper. In 1936 he returned to Switzerland, travelled to Mexico from there and, having returned home again, died in 1954.

In conclusion it is necessary to risk an interpretation of the Bauhaus's fatal changes of leadership that may seem unusual. As we have seen, Gropius's departure had been hastened by the artists who, besides not being very enthusiastic about design, did not share Gropius's commitment. These artists had increasingly made it clear that the collective, that is the Bauhaus as a collective cause, was far from being important enough for them to relegate their own creative work even temporarily into the background. Gropius's disappointment on recognizing this may have been the chief subjective cause of his departure. We must note that Kandinsky and the Bauhaus artists played a significant role in Meyer's ouster, and not only because, as we have seen, it was Kandinsky who called Dr Ludwig Grote's attention to the situation at the Bauhaus. Hesse himself offers a more nuanced picture of this in a letter: 'There was a crisis of confidence at the Bauhaus
between the director and the masters involved, giving rise to concern that the latter would not return to their positions at the end of the summer vacation if Meyer remained the director. Therefore the magistracy had to consider the possibility of losing some of the most valued members of the Masters' Council if the present director was retained. Magdalena Droste also believes that 'Meyer’s opposition within the Bauhaus, led by Kandinsky and Albers, played a significant role in his dismissal.’ It is not certain, however, that they were dismayed only by Meyer’s impending structural reforms or the possible curtailing of their spheres of activity - after all, they never wanted a greater role in communal affairs at the sacrifice of their time for artwork. The threat of communist activities must have upset them - especially Kandinsky. But the most likely primary obstacle had to be their metacommunica-tional difficulties with Meyer, whose strange manner and inability to engage in dialogue made him unpredictable. Thus the inner, artistic core of the Bauhaus had a greater role in shaping the school’s fate than has hitherto been believed. Kandinsky, Klee, Schlemmer and Albers managed to force decisions by means of resistance that was at times passive, at other times active, without wishing to indulge in explicit intramural politicking. Ultimately they were more successful in having their way than the directors themselves. Schlemmer left the Bauhaus in 1929, Klee in 1931, and Kandinsky stayed until the very end in 1933, and thus almost all of them spent more time at the Bauhaus than Gropius and Meyer’s tenures combined. And so we must realize that autonomous art, whose presence Gropius secured partially from strategic considerations and partially as a certain intellectual courtesy, proved to be a more solid and, vis-à-vis the Bauhaus, a more significant factor than one would guess from the school's design- and object-oriented profile. Gropius had intended the presence of the artists to serve as an unassailable facade behind which design could go on undisturbed. In effect it would appear that the situation became reversed, and design offered the facade behind which art could survive undiminished.

To all this we may append one final question: Was it really possible that Gropius misread Meyer, of all people? Hadn’t he recognized van Doesburg at first glance for the demagogue he was, even though Doesburg voiced theories very similar to his own? How was it possible that everyone else thought Meyer’s appointment as director a mistake, and only Gropius considered it appropriate? At the very beginning of their acquaintance Schlemmer ironically tagged Meyer 'this honest fellow' and the student Fritz Kuhr probably summed up the opinion of the student body when he labelled Meyer’s appointment a catastrophe. As for Gropius’s closest associates, such as Moholy-Nagy and Bayer, they did not wish to stay on at the Bauhaus.

It is difficult to believe that Gropius learned certain facts about Meyer only much later. But he was in a dilemma: he had to leave the Bauhaus and he had to find a successor. Meyer appeared to be acceptable to Gropius's employers, and we may assume that after Mies and Mart Stam refused him, and Breuer disappointed him, Gropius did not feel like hesitating for too long.

In the end it was Kállal who, in the spring of 1930, came up with the most acceptable evaluation of Meyer’s record as director of the Bauhaus: ‘Hannes Meyer was a promise unfulfilled. But... no matter how much good he demonstrated, he had neither sufficient security, nor power, nor consistency to implement fundamental changes. To this day the changes he introduced remain fragmentary and only serve to complicate the situation, for they keep running into the legacy of the previous director, still dominant in
the faculty, in the school’s spirit and practice, without being able to transcend the same.'

NOTES

1. In Hesse, op. cit., p. 239.
2. Whifford, op. cit., 1984; therefore in 1984 it was still being manufactured.
5. Ibid.
9. Ibid.
11. Ibid.
15. Ibid., p. 31.
16. 'everything's so torpid here, we do not intend to die in Dessau,' he wrote to Willi Baumeister on 24 November 1927; in Hannes Meyer-Architekt, Urbanist, Lehrer, op. cit., p. 167.
17. Ibid.
18. Ibid.
19. Ibid. 'Again I am faced with the question: how much longer should I put up with these unbearable conditions?'
25. Kállai, 'Stilus?' (Style?); in Munka, 1928/1, Budapest, 1928. pp. 4-5.
27. Ibid.
28. Ibid.
30. 'Unter dem Wort Konstruktivismus marschieren die Anarchisten, die ganze Spekulation... Solange das Schlagwort Mode ist'; in G - Zeitschrift für elementare Gestaltung. 1924/4, June 1924.
32. Kállai, 'Ideológák alkonya' (Twilight of Ideologies); in 365, Budapest, April 1925. pp. 19-20.
33. Kassák. 'A reklám' (Advertising); In Tiszfaság könyve (The Book of Purity), Budapest, 1926, pp. 82-4.
34. Kállai. 'ein beliebter Vorwurf gegen das bauhaus'; in bauhaus. 1928/4, p. 15.
38. 'Kandinsky was clearly implicated in a plot to have Meyer removed: It was his close friend, the art historian Ludwig Grate, who first informed Hesse that the Bauhaus was riddled with left-wing radicals encouraged by the director.' In Whitford, op. cit., p. 191.
40. Ibid.
41. Ibid.
42. Ibid.
43. Ibid.
44. 'Kopf oder Adler? zum fall bauhaus'; in Berliner Tageblatt, no. 17,10 January 1931.
The article was signed by Alexander Schawinsky. but Barbara Paul, the publisher of numerous Schawinsky documents, believes the author was Gropius. She quotes from a letter Schawinsky wrote to Gropius on 13 January 1931 referring to the article as 'our fine collaboration'. The article and letter were reprinted in Xanfi Schawinsky (exhibition catalogue), Bauhaus Archiv, Berlin, 1986, pp. 196-9; illustration p. 199.
45. Meyer, 'Mein Hinauswurf', op. cit., pp. 70 and 72.
46. Ibid., p. 73.
49. Ulm, op. cit., p. 67.
50. Ibid., p. 69.
51. Ibid., p. 70.
52. He quotes Meyer's letter to Karel Teige, written in August 1930, In which Meyer, exercising self-criticism, admits that his earlier work had been only half-hearted and inconsistent in its Marxism. In Nerdinger, op. cit., p. 25.
54. Droste, op. cit., p. 141. Although, as indicated above, he repeatedly used the term 'proletarian' in his letter 'Mein Hinauswurf...' after his time at the Bauhaus.
55. Ibid.
61. Winkler, op. cit., p. 131.
62. Ibid.
63. Ibid., p. 132.
64. Tölziner, op. cit., p. 249.
65. Ibid., p. 253.
66. A. Mordvinov, 'Bauhaus k vystavke v Moskve' (The Bauhaus to the Moscow Exhibition); in Sovetskaya Arkhitektura. 1/2, 1931; quoted by Winkler, op. cit., p. 143.
67. Ibid.
68. Fritz Hesse's letter to the Court of Arbitration, 19 August 1930; quoted by Droste, op. cit., p. 162.
69. Ibid.
70. Droste quotes a telegram from the Kandinsky Bequest at the Centre Georges Pompidou, Paris: 'After Hannes Meyer's dismissal. Professor Kandinsky recommends Mies van der Rohe for the position of Director... Chief Mayor Hesse.' Droste, op. cit., p. 164.
71. Meyer, in 'Mein Hinauswurf', op. cit., mentions that Gropius had first asked Mies van der Rohe, and only after Mies turned him down, did he approach Meyer.
72. Schawinsky (Gropius?) in the above-mentioned article. 'Kopf oder Adler?' states that this is not true, Mies had not been sounded. Howard Dearstyne (Inside the Bauhaus. Rizzoli, New York, 1986, p. 220) also states that Gropius first asked Mies van der Rohe to be his successor. Neither Meyer nor Dearstyne cite any documentation.
Chapter 15. Parallel Fates? Weimar, Dessau and Moscow

WHEN in the autumn of 1930 Meyer took the train to Moscow, he as it were with his own body, drew a line connecting Bauhaus utopias and views of art to the parallel Soviet Russian theories. The wider historical and intellectual environment of the Bauhaus included not only those currents of international Constructivism that played a significant role in Germany, but also the source, the Soviet Russian avant-garde, with all of its ecstatic enthusiasm, sober pragmatism and analytic methods, futuristic visions and ongoing euphoria. Like the Bauhaus, VKhUTEMAS (Higher Artistic-Technical Studios) was a kind of concentrate of the times: it embodied all issues that stirred art and society, and considered its task to be searching, through art, for answers and solutions to present and future problems.

During the Bauhaus's early surge of momentum Gropius expressly sought contacts, if not directly with VKhUTEMAS, then with the artists of the recently founded Soviet state. As early as 1920 he sent one of his writings to Moscow, in which, hoping for collaboration, he drew attention to the fact that the Bauhaus, just like the new Soviet artists, was exploring a synthesis of the arts. In a German intellectual environment saturated by revolutionary and mystical expectations Gropius, who was attacked for being too far to the left, thought it natural to turn towards the Russians, who already possessed revolutionary experience. The sense and compelling logic of parallel fates was stronger than the political risk of the gesture.

Subsequent personal contacts, made mostly by Russian artists travelling in Germany (before 1930, when Hannes Meyer and his students travelled to Moscow, there are documents only for Hinnerk and Lou Scheper's 1929-31 stay in Moscow), were perhaps not quite as significant as some of the literature would suggest. It is true that Kandinsky had taught at INKhUK (Institute of Artistic Culture), and for a brief period in SVOMAS (State Free Art Studios) and in VKhUTEMAS as well, before accepting Gropius's invitation to the Bauhaus. However, as we have seen, his experiences of collectivization and ideology verging on dogmatism were so negative that he did not wish to see them repeated at the Bauhaus. Malevich happened to visit the Bauhaus during the Easter vacation of 1927, at a time when hardly anyone was at the school. (The appearance of his World without Objects in the Bauhaus Books series was not brought about by personal...
contact but was a tribute to the importance of Malevich's art and his theories.) As for Lissitzky, who after his return to the Soviet Union in 1926 became the foreign emissary of VKhUTEMAS, he, as already noted, was pointedly refused an invitation by Gropius to teach at the Bauhaus.

4 The relationship, therefore, between the two movements was historical, rather than personal. It was defined accurately by Lissitzky and Ehrenburg in 1922 when, at the already mentioned Düsseldorf conference, they stated that in Russia, during the seven years of total isolation, the same problems cropped up that were on the agenda for their friends in the West, without their mutual awareness of this. This recognition proved to be the cornerstone of international Constructivism, its perspectives provided by this potential and proven store of shared ideas.

5 But Lissitzky's next statement accurately points out the differences between the respective situations and possibilities of artists in the Soviet Union and in Germany. When he went on to say that 'in Russia, after a hard-fought but victorious struggle, we have conducted the first experiment in realizing the new art on the greater scale of society and the state', he was referring to an experience that the Bauhaus, especially in 1922, could not yet claim for itself. Not even in its own immediate environment, much less 'on the greater scale of society and the state', could its experiment be considered a 'hard-fought but victorious struggle'.

6 The position and significance of the Bauhaus in the international environment will emerge more clearly if we consider, at least in their main outlines, precisely these similarities and differences between the two movements.

7 Apart from the Bauhaus, the Moscow VKhUTEMAS was the only innovative institution of higher-level art education at the time. There are such striking parallels between the programmes and histories of these two institutions that it would be a mistake to avoid a comparison of their goals, strategies and achievements. All the more so since the close similarities, the often identical language, could tempt one to the superficial conclusion that the two schools were separated merely by geography, and in all other respects were replicas of each other.

8 Precisely because during their existence there was so little actual concrete contact between the Bauhaus and VKhUTEMAS, they furnish an especially tangible example of the extent to which the spirit of the age acts as an imperative in certain concrete human endeavours. In their overall outlines, the fates of both institutions seemed to follow the same script.

9 VKhUTEMAS, like the Bauhaus, was established via the amalgamation of an academy of fine arts and a school of applied arts, at a time when the segregation of the various areas of art was no longer deemed intellectually or practically desirable. Its predecessors were SVOMAS I, successor of the former Moscow Stroganov School of Applied Arts, and SVOMAS II, created from the former Moscow Academy of Painting, Sculpture and Architecture. The amalgamation itself, and especially the adjective 'Free' inserted before the designation 'Art Studios', reflected the demands made at the April 1918 Petersburg conference of art school students: 'In our century, the century of great transformations and human liberation, every creative manifestation of artists and the arts must be absolutely free ... The freedom of art is the most important prerequisite of great art. Therefore any centralization, any autocratic attempt to dictate intellectual life, is our enemy and is unacceptable ... The petty egotism of the past, an education that nurtured
personal vanities, must be mercilessly expelled from our schools. Down with all diplomas, ranks, awards and privileges that disgrace Art! The passionate debates over the vocation and social function of the artist recall those raging at the Deutsche Werkbund in 1914. As opposed to the students demanding absolute freedom, there was another viewpoint, expressed in 1918 by the art historian Nikolai Punin, one of the ideological proponents of Productivism: 'We need plain, artistically executed utilitarian objects of high quality. Those who want and are able to work in the new state should visit the furniture, textile and porcelain factories, timber-processing plants, etc., and contemplate the needs and tastes of the proletariat, then strive to satisfy these needs and tastes, for this is the only thing needed at this time.'

The aim of the Petersburg students’ demands for total autonomy was, again, the desire to shape history, the creation of the prerequisites for great art - the anticipation of an art whose timeliness would be expressed, among others, by the essential feature that it would no longer profess the Individuum, ‘the petty egotism of the past’. Rather, it would be an art for the present, and for the coming new age that would surpass it in all respects: a future world based on collective humanity. As Walter Gropius, looking past the petty sphere of practical considerations, formulated it in 1919: 'It is not art that is of paramount importance, and not even the work of art, but the human being . . . Our task cannot be anything other than preparing the unity of a coming, harmonious age.'

These parallels are more than alluring. Between 1918 and 1922, In Moscow as in Weimar or, for that matter, in Amsterdam, the stakes were not merely the creation of a new style. A geometric formal language of constructivism, then of functionalism, became the illustrated holy scripture of a new religion. The new world of collectivism, transcending all worldly conflicts, was projected in these crystalline systems of pure colours and intersecting straight lines. Everywhere it proclaimed a totally fresh start: both In the East and in the West visual thinking meant predominantly basic forms and primary colours. The willingness to question and dismantle the basic tenets of civilization verged on anarchy: Lothar Schreyer banned words from the stage, replacing them with elemental sounds, while Khlebnikov substituted for words so-called zaum, sounds beyond meaning. The ballast of old-fashioned culture, which extremists took to include all art forms and even words themselves, was not going to be admitted into the new world. Everything had to begin all over again: at the Weimar Bauhaus as well as at the Moscow VKhUTEMAS the students -and, for that matter, the teachers too - had to relearn the processes of seeing and touching, and the classrooms featured nothing but analysis and basic operations.

The question is whether the Bauhaus made the same journey as VKhUTEMAS on the road from the initial, thorough investigation of the inner components of art, detailed formal analysis and social rebellion, all the way to integration with society and design production. Was the path traversed from the Arbeitsrat, the Novembergruppe and the First Manifesto all the way to the Bauhaus wallpaper the same as the path that led from the demands of the Petersburg students and the establishment of Free Art Studios, to a production-oriented institution whose intellectual programme had been whittled away? At the outset, it was a basic priority of VKhUTEMAS, founded in 1920 by a State Decree signed by Lenin, to offer, in the spirit of freedom, an extraordinarily flexible, open and experimental course of studies. In its first stage, between 1920 and 1923, under Efim V. Ravdel as rector, problems of expression and composition constituted the core of the first-year Preliminary Course. The curriculum also included the following compulsory
Subjects: chemistry, physics, mathematics, geometry, theory of tones, military instruction, colour theory, a foreign language and art history. In 1920 students in the Preliminary Course took, in sequence, the following five subjects: (1) 'Maximal Colouristic Expression' (taught by Lyubov Popova); (2) 'Discovering Form through Colour' (instructors: Aleksandr Osmerkin and German Fedorov); (3) 'Simultaneity of Form and Colour in the Plane' (instructor: Aleksandr Drevin); (4) 'Two-dimensional Colour/Suprematism' (instructor: Ivan Kliun); and (5) 'Construction' (taught by Alexander Rodchenko).

This curriculum reveals the same degree of concentration on painting as the Preliminary Course at the early Bauhaus, taught by Itten, and the analytic approach, investigating and dissecting the anatomy of colours and forms, their basic components and the mechanism of their effects, is again reminiscent of the early Bauhaus. For example, Rodchenko began his course with an introduction to materials - wood, aluminium, paper, glass - then, after considering colour and form, progressed to texture: the students polished, washed, abraded and scraped various materials in order to achieve diverse surface effects. In addition Rodchenko, who was never a student of Adolf Hölzel's, had recourse to that most obvious method of analysis, the study of contrasts. During the 1921-2 academic year the spirit of instruction became more directed, in line with the aims of Constructivism. There were four new courses: 'Colour Construction', 'Spatial Construction', 'Graphic Construction' and 'Mass Construction', indicating the more focused nature of the new interests and sensibilities. By 1923 this process intensified, becoming even more concentrated and simplified; now the topics studied were subsumed under three headings: 'Plane and Colour', 'Mass and Space', 'Space and Mass'. Each of these constituted a so-called kontsentr, or area of concentration.

The second phase of VKhUTEMAS, just like that of the Bauhaus, lasted from 1923 to 1926, during which time Vladimir A. Favorsky held the post of rector. In conformance with the government's 1923 Educational Reform, the emphasis was placed on collaboration with industrial production. Contact was established with outside manufacturers: production studios and workshops assumed an increased importance at the expense of purely artistic creation. The kontsentrs of the Preliminary Course were reduced to three: 'Colour and Plane', 'Graphics', 'Mass and Space'.

After the Academic Conference of 1926 - when it was decided that 'the level of the productive professions had to be raised' (creative artistic work of a non-productive nature was not even mentioned) - Pavel Novitsky was appointed as the new rector. The wood and metal workshops were amalgamated, thus giving rise to Dermetfak (Department of Wood/Metal), and the school's offerings were narrowed down to an even stricter orientation towards production. This was also expressed by the gesture of a name change in 1928 to VKhUTEIN - Higher Artistic-Technical Institute. This change corresponds to the Bauhaus accepting the designation of Design Institute in 1926, and the title of Professor for its faculty members, in symbolic acknowledgment, as it were, of the fact that integration with the rest of society, by now programmatic at both schools, went hand in hand with a rightful claim to consolidation as institutions of higher education in the arts.

At the conferences held in 1926 each department reiterated the complete renunciation of artistic subjectivity, along with the Interpretation of painting as an applied, decorative art. The words of Rector Novitsky could have been uttered by Hannes Meyer: 'The faculty of painting is not training so-called artists, but experts in definite areas: painter-pedagogues, creators of monumental genres, decorators, club-instructors and restorers.'
The faculty of painting does not speculate in genius. Its chief aim is to train useful, ordinary artists who will take an active role in the work of construction.  

Another common feature in the fate of both the Bauhaus and VKhUTEMAS was that no matter how readily they integrated themselves into society, the power of the totalitarian state intervened to put them out of business.

However, these correspondences cannot prevent us from concluding that the nearly identical formulas evolved in both East and West during the 1920s did not in fact document actual similarities or parallels, but were only after-images of a single, brief, euphoric interlude, artifacts left behind by a longing both in the East and in the West for a world community and universal redemption.

Ever since art-historical research has uncovered most of the historical circumstances of the Soviet Russian avant-garde, and thus prompted Soviet bureaucrats to unearth art objects sequestered in museum storage vaults - while private collectors also made more and more art works available for the public - we have been able to discern the outlines of significant differences that cannot be disguised by the deceptively similar wording of manifestos. What is more, we have come to realize that often the same words carry distinctly different meanings in East and West.

The Bauhaus and VKhUTEMAS, in the course of their apparently parallel histories, in fact took diametrically opposed paths.

Starting from its marginal avant-garde position, the Bauhaus became a fashionable design and architectural school with successful products by the end of the 1920s, whereas VKhUTEMAS started out as an institution of central importance - only to have its artists, activities and products relegated to the margins by the end of the decade.

This was primarily caused by the fact that the respective situations of these two schools differed on every possible count.

The Bauhaus came into existence in a defeated country, expecting a revolution, whose hopes were not yet quite dashed. The school faced violent antipathy and resistance in its immediate environment, forcing it to be on the defensive during its entire history. As opposed to this, VKhUTEMAS was the brainchild of a victorious revolution, it was the avant-garde elevated to the status of official art, consecrated by the signatures of Lenin and Lunacharsky.

The Bauhaus was organized in a country where, in spite of the change in the form of government, it could still rely on the existing, historically evolved forms of judicial and economic infrastructure. VKhUTEMAS, on the other hand, functioned in a country with a paternalistic tradition, where the tsarist administration (perpetuated by the revolutionary bureaucracy) had not quite institutionalized judicial and economic processes. The Bauhaus, before it ran into actual political obstacles, found a wide sphere of activity within the familiar, established realm of regulations and common law. In contradistinction, every movement made by VKhUTEMAS always had to rely on the increasingly inscrutable and unpredictable personal goodwill of the political leadership.

The Bauhaus stood outside of society, but was forced into transactions with it, in order to survive. It had to purchase its independence from day to day by making concessions of one kind or another (gestures directed at the Weimar craft guilds, some of the parliamentary parties, and the local populace); it yielded bits and pieces of its independence that were deemed dispensable or renewable, in the hope of retaining the greater part of the same. In contrast, VKhUTEMAS was basically - if not in every detail -
identified with the new, revolutionary state: it was directed by artists who were themselves the developers and directors of the state's art policies. While freeing themselves from the earlier cultural apparatus, they now instituted a new art officialdom, and gained power on their own behalf. VKhUTEMAS was the state's own art school, where it intended to train its own rising generation of artists, in the spirit of its own ideology. At the outset there was hardly any distance, much less opposition, between the state and the school.

26 The Bauhaus remained in the perennial position of art as opposition/resistance. Gropius had even defined this: 'The most important thing is always to remain in the opposition. This way one stays fresh.' From this quarter it tried to make the conservative majority accept its ideals and objectives by attempting to convince society of the superior quality of its offerings. In total contrast to this, VKhUTEMAS was in a position of power, while the large majority that did not understand or did not favour this new formal language, and considered the new works anarchic and impenetrable, was temporarily muzzled.

27 Gropius had faith in the persuasive power of culture and art, and endeavoured to stay away from any type of political power-play. Taking a stance on the relation of art and the state, he wrote in 1919: 'There is no need for artists' councils and interest groups. Art is not organizable.' In Russia, on the contrary, art was found to be most organizable, and in this respect the position of the artist was not even a subject for discussion. During the first years after the revolution, it was impossible to separate serving the revolutionary cause from serving that of the state or art; not even the anarchists, or that perennial rebel, Mayakovsky, considered themselves to be opposition.

28 In Germany during the mid-1920s the economic consolidation, accompanied by a temporary political respite, also dulled the edge of the opposition, transferring resistance more and more from the field of politics to the professional issues of art. In 1923-4 there was a glimmer of hope that the Bauhaus might achieve both intellectual and practical - that is, financial - autonomy, in the role of an educational institution capable of taking the initiative towards a society with which it could reach a rational compact by serving its needs.

29 The situation of Soviet artists and of VKhUTEMAS was radically different, since, as soldiers of the revolution, they all relied on state support. This support was based on political trustworthiness, and, as history amply demonstrates, ceased with that trust. Until the end of the 1920s, as long as Lunacharsky continued as Commissar for Culture and Education, most of the artists toeing the revolutionary line enjoyed faculty or administrative appointments at institutions of higher education, or occupied some other key cultural position. Only after Lenin's death did the separate contours of state power and the artistic sphere become perceptibly distinct. For a while, the state included modern art in its programmatic preservation of the achievements of the revolution. But it soon became obvious that art was not very amenable for consolidation, and therefore the state, in the course of its centralization and consolidation, expelled the artists who still considered themselves to be revolutionaries, thereby radically altering the relation of the state and the arts. By the end of the decade a corps of bureaucrats had come to control art schools, creative studios and associations, and they issued not suggestions but orders. The tragic oversight of the revolutionary artists was that they did not notice - perhaps there was no way they could - the direction in which the process that they themselves had initiated was heading. By the time they did see the light, it was time to be silenced. The
bureaucrats of the Soviet state, like so many ants angered by their tiresome toils, rejected the lightheaded grasshoppers who would continue to play their music.

The most tangible difference between the potentials and the achievements of the Bauhaus on the one hand and VKhUTEMAS on the other, however, was the fact that their often similar-sounding programmes and curricula hid very different objective realities. The road the Bauhaus had to traverse, from Peter Ke ler's 1922 red, yellow and blue wooden cradle to Marcel Breuer's tubular furniture and Mies van der Rohe's more sophisticated chairs, was in fact shaped by society's actual demands. After all, society, totally apart from any political overtones, was not interested in Bauhaus experiments in primary colours and basic geometric forms - and much less in the worldview lying behind it all - or in the contents of Itten's Preliminary Course. All it demanded was objects made of sound materials, streamlined products of modern technology: chromium steel and synthetics, in plentiful supply and at a low cost. Let us not forget that the Bauhaus, with all of its innovations, was the continuation of a living tradition. Even the demands formulated by Meyer were, for the most, part and parcel of the industrial aesthetic concepts evolved by the Deutsche Werkbund as early as the 1910s, and, although German industry suffered great losses during the war, it had enough resources left for recovery, and continuity was maintained. The Bauhaus could espouse a new style and worldview because an old one had been in existence. The design and manufacturing technology of artifacts possessed certain powerful traditions, against which it was possible to counterpoise something that was new in approach, besides being of necessity better made and better looking, so that it could compete with the old.

By way of contrast, VKhUTEMAS and Soviet designers could not lean on such powerful traditions. 'We need objects that are as simple and primitive as our way of life,' said Tatlin, and as late as 1929 he directed attention to the facts of life when commenting about modern tubular furniture: 'We, too, conducted experiments in this direction, but early on ... we discovered that the material itself - steel tubes - was not available because of shortages.' Hannes Meyer recalled similar shortages, while in the Soviet Union: 'We had at times very heated clashes with the Soviet reality of those days. There was no concrete, no construction machinery, cement, plywood, glass, tiling material. Nails and screws were worth their weight in gold. We favoured structures without metal.' Tatlin, too, confronted his students and readers with the reality that in Russia, wood was the only accessible, universally available material, and therefore, from sledges to bentwood furniture, all too many items had to be conceived and produced in wood. And even so, strict economy had to be observed; he recommended thinner laths for bentwood chairs than those used by the Thonet factory, and claimed that this version 'would be less costly than Thonet chairs to mass-produce and would be more comfortable.' The choice of materials, which in Germany was a matter of taste, attitude and optimal economy, in the Soviet Union was simply forced by practical necessity. The bentwood objects and furniture produced by Tatlin and his students are not comparable to designs and objects made at the Bauhaus, for the simple reason that there was no comparable free choice of materials. Whereas in 1926 Georg Muche was experimenting with metal dwellings, Rodchenko, the head of the VKhUTEMAS metal workshop, attempted to design prefabricated buildings made of standardized wooden elements.

Certain specific ideas had different motivations and aims in East and West. The 1923 Bauhaus exhibition featured Alma Buscher's multifunctional children's furniture series, products of a spirit of functionality and free play. Meanwhile, the multifunctional
furniture designs developed in VKhUTEMAS workshops - the work of Sobolev, Morozov and Galaktyonov - were dictated by dire necessity: given the extreme shortage of apartments, families that were squeezed into a single room needed tables that a single turn could change into a seat or a workbench, or chairs that could convert into beds. Here, too, shortages directed the designer, a far cry from the luxury of playfulness. (Furniture expressly intended for children was not even designed at VKhUTEMAS.)

These facts in part reveal how the East and the West differed in their interpretations of the terms Constructivism and Functionalism.

In the West the new design quite simply became fashionable, just like anything that could be bought or sold. Ernő Kállai, like most Bauhaus people, was at first astounded by the prospect that the Bauhaus mentality could be simply summed up as a style. One year later he recognized that this was one of society's fundamental strategies vis-à-vis intellectual values: in the act of extracting and integrating them it lowered them to its own level. "To remain a stranger to the department store mentality, the world of sensationalism and ready-made goods: this is the best one can say about art today. Art cannot keep a great enough distance from this sort of reality." While in the West the artist had to make an effort to stay aloof from the levelling force of the daily grind - and its concomitant, the marketplace - Soviet artists did everything possible in order to become part and parcel of the everyday world of consumerism. They accepted nationwide propaganda and decorative design assignments (poster design, agitprop trains, building and street decorations for holidays, etc.) as well as the design and decoration of items in everyday use (tea sets and dinnerware, etc.) or textile design - any means of penetrating into people's lives, precisely into that world of 'sensationalism and ready-made goods', albeit maintaining a claim for universality. In 1923 Pravda published a call for artists to collaborate by executing designs for industrial production. Lyubov Popova, Alexandra Exter, Varvara Stepanova and Rodchenko were the first to respond. The art historian Roginskaya dubbed these early textile designs by Constructivists 'the first Soviet fashions'.

But these were fashions only for the art historian; in real life, these geometric and propaganda motifs did not win over the consumers. In glaring contrast to the Bauhaus, whose wallpaper designs are manufactured and marketed in Germany to this day, the Constructivist aesthetic did not establish itself in the everyday life of the Soviet Union. The function of art was different, and it still is: in the Soviet Union it never possessed that sober relationship to everyday reality which was present in even the most daring projects of the Bauhaus. Géza Perneczky has pointed out the fact that the Soviet Russian avant-garde artists, above all, drew up plans, visions on paper, that were never realized: 'The visions were not threatened by practical failures.' And even though many Soviet Constructivists wished to triumph in everyday life, this did not refer to professional activities such as furniture design, interior decoration or metalwork, as in the case of their Western counterparts. The Russian artist was always expected to be a prophet, and so it is not surprising that instead of design-type work, many of them, such as Malevich and Lissitzky, chose repatriation in the Twenties - not to mention the case of those Hungarian artists who, after the defeat of the Hungarian Commune, escaped to the East rather than to the West. In Perneczky's words: 'The torchlight of the revolution, the promise of fulfilment proved a stronger attraction than the electric light of well-equipped workshops.'
Kállal called attention in 1926 to another aspect of Constructivism. In its standardized, simple, geometric grammar he glimpsed the possibility of escaping, in one fell swoop, from a dense, tangled over-determinism, from sinking into the provincialism of national identity. He wrote: 'It seemed that this formula allowed for an immediate assimilation into the context of the desired new world and its collective ... without having to evolve through the stage of national traditions. This possibility, for artists who came from the outlying border regions of European internationalism, had to be a very important consideration. The utopianistic perspectives of Constructivism were a revelation for the unbroken, enthusiastic spirit and flammable imagination of the Eastern temperament.'

It was largely because of this peripheral situation of the East, coupled with the idiosyncratic Russian attitude towards art, that a rational vision of the future, which, in the West, smoothly translated into functionalist design, became coupled with such profound irrationalism in the Eastern half of Europe.

NOTES


3. INKhUK (Institut Khudozhestvennoot Kultury) functioned from May 1920 to 1 January 1922 in Moscow, when it was reorganized as an autonomous department of the Academy of Arts, and functioned as such until early 1924. It supported independent research projects.

4. Cf. chapter 8. quotes belonging to notes 10 and 11.


6. See chapter 7, note 47.

7. Ibid.

8. Quoted by German Karginov in Rodchenko, Corvina, Budapest, 1975, p. 123.

9. Nikolai Punin, 'Khram ili zavod?' (Cathedral or Factory?); in Isskustvo kommuny [Art of the Collective], no. 1, 1918, p. 3; republished in Gassner and Gilten, op. cit., p. 82.


11. Short for zaumenny ('beyond meaning'). Tatlin designed the sets for Khlebnikov's play Zangezi.

12. In connection with VKhUTEMAS I chiefly relied on the following historical and source works: Lodder, op. cit., chapter 4; Gassner and Gilten, op. cit., chapter entitled 'Freie Staatliche Kunstwerkstätten (SVOMAS), Höhere Staatliche-Künstlerisch-Technische Werkstätten (VKhUTEMAS), Höheres Staatliches Künstlerisch-Technisches Institut (VKhUTEIN)'; Alina Abramova, 'VKhUTEMAS-VKhUTEIN', in Moskovskoe Vysshee Khudozhestvenno-Promyshlennoe Uchilishche 1925-1965 (Moscow Higher Art-Industrial Institute 1925-1965). Moscow, 1965; Karginov...
15. Ibid., pp. 113 and 124.
16. Ibid., p. 114.
17. L. Leizerov. 'Evaluation of the VKhUTEMAS Painting Faculty's 1927 Conference'; in Gassner and Gilten, op. cit., p. 159.
18. Ibid.
20. Cf. Ilya Ehrenburg, Emberek, évek, életem (autobiography), Gondolat, Budapest, 1963; Part Two, especially p. 271: 'The futurists thought that people's tastes could be changed as rapidly as the economic structure of society, in Isskustvo kommuny one would read, "We indeed claim, and would hardly resist the opportunity to use, government power for the realization of the ideals of our art", etc'
25. Tatlin, 'The Artist as Designer of the Way of Life', op. cit. 'For us in the Soviet Union, the bent tubular frame sled popular in the United States Is unsuitable... Therefore in place of the steel tubes we substitute bent maple laths, similar to that used for Thonet furniture. That maple-wood sleds are more advantageous for us Is obvious. There are whole forests of material available, and the production is far less expensive than that of metal tube sleds.'
26. Ibid.
33. Ibid., p. 60.
Chapter 16. Endgame

1 IF WE SEE the history of the Bauhaus as the fate of the original Bauhaus idea as defined by Gropius, then we may consider this fate fulfilled by Hannes Meyer's manifesto, 'bauhaus and society'. However, the school's history still had a final chapter left: that of Judgment Day.

2 Mies van der Rohe was appointed director of the Bauhaus on 5 August 1930. Mies was born in 1886, and his career had run in parallel with Gropius's. From 1908 to 1910 they worked together at Peter Behrens's office; they met again in the Novembergruppe, and both were members of the Werkbund, of which Mies was elected vice president in 1926. He was considered one of the most gifted and respected German architects. The ethereal elegance and originality of the German Pavilion he designed for the 1929 Barcelona World Fair brought him world fame. According to Philip Johnson: 'Here for the first time Mies was able to build a structure unhampered by functional requirements... [this was] one of the milestones of modern architecture.' Peter Behrens, recalling the moment when he first glimpsed it, stated: 'My heart leaped up.'

3 Still, Mies was not given a unanimously joyous reception at the Bauhaus. 'A large number of students, egged on by a handful of militant communists, gathered in the canteen and demanded that he exhibit his work, to enable them to decide whether or not he was qualified to direct the Bauhaus.' Mies called in the police, and several students were expelled from the school. For a few weeks the Bauhaus remained closed.

4 Mies van der Rohe did not engage in politics, but only his employers considered this a virtue. The Bauhaus youth thought this a betrayal: to them, Meyer's dismissal and Mies's appointment was a scandal.
Under Mies's directorship the school became a regular university. 'We enter the building at 8 a.m., and at 5 p.m., after finishing with the day's courses, we go back home again ... Many say that since the Bauhaus has become more like a technical school it has become much better than before. Mies is a wonderful architect, but as a man, and particularly as the Director, he is very reactionary ... There simply is no life left in the whole shebang.'

Not everyone concurred with this; Josef Albers thought that 'Mies is a wonderful guy' and as far as he was concerned, continued to enjoy his work.

Pius Pahl, who enrolled at the Bauhaus in 1930, came under the influence of the prevailing atmosphere:

There was no comparison between the atmosphere at the Bauhaus and that of any of the other schools I had attended. The Bauhausler regarded themselves as part of the Bauhaus, just as monks might regard themselves as part of their monastery...

The recognition of the connections in industrial developments, the shifting of production, the necessary changes in the sociological structure, the intellectual assimilation of these factors, the threat to individuality in an industrial state, and other problems all were of great concern to us Bauhäusler... Mies takes us for the fourth semester. The studio hours are always very interesting. Mies walks from table to table and helps in his clear and calm way ... It was after the lecture of a Swiss architect to a large audience that an argument started. The functionalists substantially supported the speaker, while a large section of the students protested, but not too successfully, until Howard Dearstyne described the commendable clothes of the speaker, including the impressive red tie, and asked the opponents for an explanation of the function of the tie.

It was also true that some of the faculty departed: in 1931 Klee left for the Düsseldorf Academy and Gunta Stölzl for Zürich; Schlemmer went to Breslau in 1929.

Many people considered Mies van der Rohe a 'formalist' and an 'elitist' for designing family homes for wealthy patrons instead of inexpensive housing for the masses.
Undoubtedly, his style of leadership was different from Gropius's and Meyer's. Actually he resided in Berlin and commuted three times a week to Dessau. He did not strive for spiritual communion with his colleagues and students, but fulfilled his duties as director and was an excellent teacher.\textsuperscript{7}

Before starting the first semester in 1931, each student was mailed a declaration that had to be signed and returned to the Bauhaus to qualify for attendance. Among other things, the statement included the following: \textquoteleft With my signature I undertake to attend the courses regularly, to sit in the canteen no longer than the meal lasts, not to stay in the canteen in the evening, to avoid political discussions, and to take care not to make any noise in the town and to go out well dressed.\textquoteleft\textsuperscript{8} The need for such regulations is a testimonial not so much about the Bauhaus as about the changed atmosphere of Dessau and Germany.

Mies van der Rohe's Bauhaus took on the character of a modern school of architecture insofar as it placed total emphasis on theoretical training. In 1930 the cabinet-making, metal and mural-painting workshops were amalgamated into a single 'interior design' workshop directed from 1932 by Mies's partner, Lily Reich, who assumed responsibility for the textile workshop as well. The overall duration of training was decreased from nine to seven semesters, and the Bauhaus now consisted of two divisions: one for exterior architecture and one for interior design. Of the former Bauhaus masters the only one left was Kandinsky who, as late as 1932, was still complaining to Mies about his reduced teaching hours.\textsuperscript{9}

In October 1931 the Nazi party entered the Dessau elections with a programme that included not only the shutting down of the Bauhaus but the demolition of the building into ashes and dust. By this time, everything had become saturated with political content. Whether Mies liked it or not, modern architecture became identified with leftist political views, since it did not point towards the monumentality or folk art espoused by the ideology of the Third Reich. The NSDAP (German Nazi party) considered the international style of modern architecture to be a Jewish-Bolshevik contamination. The flat roof became a sign of primitivism alien to the Nordic races.

In 1932 the Nazis came to power in Dessau. Paul Schultzze-Naumburg, author of a work entitled \textit{Art and Race}, who became the director of the Weimar Academy of Fine Arts in 1930 and, as we have seen, used this capacity to destroy the murals and reliefs of Oskar Schlemmer and Joost Schmidt, now arrived in Dessau to offer an expert opinion (for he was an architect) about the Bauhaus. As was to be expected, on the basis of this the school was shut down and the entire faculty fired. Fritz Hesse somehow managed to secure salaries until October,\textsuperscript{10} as well as the disbursement of royalty payments. The decision to demolish the building was commented upon by the \textit{Anhalter Tageszeitung} in the following terms: "The disappearance of this so-called "Institute of Design" will mean the disappearance from German soil of one of the most prominent places of Jewish-Marxist "art" manifestation. May the total demolition follow soon, and may in the same spot where today stands the sombre glass palace of oriental taste, the "aquarium", as it has been popularly dubbed in Dessau, soon rise homesteads and parks that will provide the German people with homes and places of relaxation.\textsuperscript{11}"

In the end the building was not demolished, for the costs proved prohibitive.

Mies van der Rohe's new strategy was to continue the Bauhaus as a private institution. In 1932 he rented an abandoned telephone factory in the Steglitz district of Berlin and
moved the Bauhaus there. In addition to many of the Dessau students, there were numerous new students who enrolled. The faculty consisted of Albers, Kandinsky, Lily Reich, Walter Peterhans, Ludwig Hilberseimer, Hinnerk Scheper and Alcar Rudelt. The school was able to operate for one full semester. Kandinsky, in spite of his argument with Mies, taught the theory of art. As Pius Pahl recalls:

When I arrived in Berlin, the remodelling of the abandoned, old factory building had just begun. We all helped; we pulled down old walls and built new ones. Although the financial situation of the Bauhaus was hopeless, thanks to the personal sacrifices made by the faculty, instruction could commence. No one knew whether the political balance would tilt to the extreme left or to the extreme right. Still, for one final semester we could work undisturbed by Internal dissensions. There was one very successful Bauhaus festival attended by many friends. We also organized a semester-closing exhibition, which, considering the reduced circumstances of the Berlin Bauhaus, was a success.  

The new elections were held on 5 March. The National Socialists wasted no time: in a physical, although not in a legal, sense the Bauhaus was shut down on 11 April 1933. On the day before, Kandinsky wrote to a former student: 'Berlin is perfectly calm ... 17 new students enrolled, including a Japanese woman.' On the following day, according to Pius Pahl's account, 'early in the morning the police came in trucks and closed down the Bauhaus. Those Bauhaus students who did not possess suitable identification papers (and who had, in those days!) were taken away on the trucks.' On the same morning the remaining students and faculty discussed the options still open to them. One possibility was emigration, but this was dismissed by Mies van der Rohe. He still hoped, as many others did, according to Pius Pahl, that the NSDAP, having taken over, would promulgate a more lenient cultural policy. Such hopes did not seem unfounded back then. A few days later, for example, the Reich's Cultural Office made known its intention to have Mies van der Rohe design a palace of culture for Hitler.

The day after the closing of the Bauhaus Mies paid a visit to Alfred Rosenberg's office, in the hope that the president of the 'Militant Alliance of German Culture' would support him. However, Rosenberg informed him that the Bauhaus was a symbol of those forces 'who were putting up the hardest fight against National Socialism'.

Mies van der Rohe made the following notes about the meeting:

I put the question to Rosenberg: 'Where do you, as the cultural leader of the new Germany, stand on the aesthetic problems which have emerged as a result of the technical and industrial development? Do you consider it important, culturally, to work on these problems?' - Rosenberg: 'Why do you ask?' - Mies: 'Because work on such problems is the major concern of the Bauhaus, and I would like to know whether there is any sense in our continuing these efforts.' - Rosenberg: 'Are these problems not dealt with at the Institutes of Technology?' - Mies: 'No. At the Institutes of Technology these fields are split into too many special disciplines and one should take just exactly the opposite course. These problems of aesthetics can only be dealt with when taken all together. Moreover, they must really be worked on, which is something impossible to do at institutes where one single teacher has up to one hundred and fifty students. I have, in three different semesters, a total of about thirty young students, so that I am truly able to work with each one of them.'

- Rosenberg: 'Why do you want the backing of political power? We are not thinking of stifling private initiative. If you are so sure of what you are doing, your ideas will succeed anyway.' - Mies: 'For any cultural effort one needs peace, and I would like to know whether we will have that peace.' - Rosenberg: 'Are you hampered in your work?' - Mies: 'Hampered is not the correct term. Our house has been sealed, and I...
would be grateful to you if you could look into this matter.' - This Rosenberg promised to do."17

18 Four months after the closing of the school Mies was offered permission to re-open the Bauhaus on two conditions: 'Hilberseimer had to be dismissed, for being a member of the Social Democrat party, and Kandinsky had to be dismissed, for his theories are dangerous in our eyes.'18 On 10 August 1933 Mies sent out letters informing students that 'at its last meeting, the faculty resolved to dissolve the Bauhaus. The reason for this decision was the difficult economic situation of the institute.'19

19 Rosenberg was not mistaken. The spirit of independence represented by Kandinsky, among others, was a much more radical enemy of Nazism than any communist or professional Bauhaus programme could ever be.

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NOTES

3. Ibid., p. 221.
4. 'A Swiss Architecture Student Writes to a Swiss Architect about the Bauhaus Dessau'; in Wingler, op. cit., p. 175.
11. Ibid.
13. Kandinsky, Letter to Werner Drawes, Berlin, 10 April 1933; In bauhaus berlin, op. cit., p. 27.
16. Ibid.
17. Ludwig Mies van der Rohe,' Minutes of a Conference, Recorded from Memory, of 12 April 1933 with Alfred Rosenberg, Concerning the Closing of the Bauhaus Berlin, 13 April 1933'; Wingler's copy from the private archives of Mies van der Rohe; in bauhaus berlin, op. cit., p. 130.
Epilogue: Liberalism's Utopia

1 In 1923 the Haus am Horn, with its predesigned objects and built-in furniture, doubtless not only suggested a new, frill-free way of life, but actually forced this on its occupants. The tenant would have been in trouble had he or she wanted to assert personal tastes by bringing furniture of another type into the house. Likewise, difficulties would have arisen if the rooms were to be used for purposes other than what they had been designed for. Meanwhile this house and its furnishings, intended as prototypes, already signalled the shift of one Utopian image of the future into another one that seemed to be melding with the present: the lifestyle of the 'future' was now being offered to the families of the day. By this time the Gesamtkunstwerk as a representative building was no longer the ruling thought; the realities involved now were the chair, kitchen sink, tea kettle, and the key words were inexpensive, simple, functional.

2 This tendency was carried by Marcel Breuer's invention of tubular metal furniture to its truly elegant formulation and actual social acceptance and commercial realization. What had been a trend or a beginning in 1923 became, in the tubular chairs of 1926, a fully realized style. The tubular furniture visibly influenced other designers towards simpler, more ethereal and wittier solutions. The Bauhaus objects made after 1926, even with all of their functionality, are much more flexible and graceful, and possess more aesthetic appeal than the frequently clumsy and heavy designs made in the Weimar days.

3 The phenomenon of tubular furniture clearly illustrates how the Bauhaus changed, from the initiator of future-oriented visions and proposals, into the leading design institute of its day. In the end it had created a style, and not merely a design style for objects, but a style for an easy and simple life designed with a superior rationalism in mind, unfettered by superfluous clutter. In the face of the Protestant ethic it legitimized the right to comfort and exploited the aesthetic qualities residing in simplicity and pure contours. It addressed the 'modern' aspects of the age, people with one foot in the future, who felt no great loss in ridding themselves of the objects, accumulated in most families, that spoke of past generations. These people were willing to give up the characteristically central European home that melded into a unique distillate of disparate periods and styles, to shed the weighty omnipresence of all that was past for the light, weightless and sporty atmosphere of an almost empty room. Square tables, round chairs, cradles delimited by triangles, and spherical tea kettles made up this easily surveyable world, the handy realm of loosely configurable, freely variable furniture, and sparse, easily storable objects. This
modernism evolved into an ethic - in part thanks to the great visionaries of the early 1920s, whose formal language was translated into objects. This was a new, progressive creed, anti-bourgeois and anti-conservative, placing its manifesto in apartments that were white and splashed with colour, clear-cut, sunny, smaller, and more economical and practical, as opposed to the nooks and crannies and dark brown tones of the dim, costly to heat, older bourgeois apartments. These new buildings, apartments and objects were designed along lines of economy and functionalism so as to guarantee their users maximum freedom and comfort. In contrast to the constraints implied by the ground plan of the Haus am Horn, the Dessau Bauhaus building and the masters' residences demonstrate a more flexible notion of space, with sliding doors and movable partitions giving a greater degree of freedom to the buildings' occupants.

The Bauhaus style became the style of a liberal way of life: the buildings and objects arrayed themselves around a person who was assumed to be free, who would rearrange the location and function of objects according to the needs of the moment. In place of the static, stagnant, old-fashioned bourgeois home, the members of the new, modern middle classes received a dynamic home, and along with it a more dynamically designed lifestyle that they could keep in motion. A room furnished with tubular furniture could be emptied or rearranged in minutes, and such mobility was part and parcel of that more generally applicable mode of life, the new style of daily life that was realized in the design of every single object.

These objects designed with the liberal middle class in mind represented an international style insofar as they did not carry the marks of any one national style. In its place they carried the supranational quality of rationalism. The lack of decorative motifs created a formal language: the functional skeleton of objects projected a contour and became an aesthetic quality following the principle of 'minimal number of elements, maximal aesthetic appeal'. When the skeleton and structure became visible, form and function were no longer distinguishable. Whether we are talking about the Bauhaus of Gropius, who considered formal qualities as function, or of the cold and puritanical Hannes Meyer, or of Mies van der Rohe with his more pampered sense of form, the thrust was always to bring a design approach symbolized by the rationality of straight lines and pure geometric forms on a common denominator with the liberal lifestyle, the world of the modern middle classes.

In doing so they attempted to do the impossible, just as much as when they tried to unite the spheres of art and technology via the magic spell of a slogan. The great spirits of classic modernism, obsessed with the idea of design, were thinking in terms of precisely constructed world-models. But their ideal of man controlling the cosmos from a central point had little in common with the actual middle-class citizen who buys a salt cellar, selects wallpaper and deals with the other concerns of a budding consumer society. The overview is juxtaposed against the view from below: and the Bauhaus made an attempt to design things from the position of the overview, but with an eye to the needs of those below, articulating the vision of the New World in terms of buildings, interiors and specific objects.

The hypothesis of great Utopias is that one must begin with a plan of the Whole World, and the details will automatically follow: a well-designed world would evolve its own human type, who in turn would design the objects needed. After its initial, fervid stage the Bauhaus reversed this order, and addressed its designs to a world formed by the rational but personal insights of free individuals. The rationale was that this type of
human being and the designs of the Bauhaus would sooner or later find each other, and the intellectual/spiritual experience and recognitions engendered by this meeting would produce the New World - through the free choice of the individual, but determined by the world of (designed) objects placed at his disposal.

They believed the Future’s ideally functioning ‘world-machine’ to be realizable through the freely chosen activities of free citizens. This supports the statement that ‘not only may we speak of a liberal Utopia, but in its pure form liberalism, too, is a utopia.’

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