Something's Missing:
A Discussion between Ernst Bloch and Theodor W. Adorno
on the Contradictions of Utopian Longing

Horst Krüger (moderator): Today the word 'utopia' does not have a good sound to it. It has been depreciated and is used primarily in a negative sense to mean "utopian." There is something anachronistic about our theme and our term as well.

Theodor W. Adorno: If I may be allowed to say something first, even though I may not be the correct person to begin, since my friend Ernst Bloch is the one mainly responsible for restoring honor to the word 'utopia' in his early work *The Spirit of Utopia (Geist der Utopie)*, I would like to remind us right away that numerous so-called utopian dreams—for example, television, the possibility of traveling to other planets, moving faster than sound—have been fulfilled. However, insofar as these dreams have been realized, they all operate as though the best thing about them had been forgotten—one is not happy about them. As they have been realized, the dreams themselves have assumed a peculiar character of sobriety, of the spirit of positivism, and beyond that, of boredom. What I mean by this is that it is not simply a matter of presupposing that what really is has limitations as opposed to that which has infinitely imaginable possibilities. Rather, I mean something concrete, namely, that one sees oneself almost always deceived: the fulfillment of the wishes takes something away from the substance of the wishes, as in the fairy tale where the farmer is granted three wishes, and, I believe, he wishes his wife to have a sausage on her nose and then must use the second wish to have the sausage removed from her nose. In other words, I mean that one can watch television today, look at things that are far away, but instead of the wish-image providing access to the erotic utopia, one sees in the
best of circumstances some kind of more or less pretty pop singer, who continues to deceive the spectator in regard to her prettiness insofar as she sings some kind of nonsense instead of showing it, and this song generally consists in bringing together "roses" with "moonlight" in harmony. Above and beyond this one could perhaps say in general that the fulfillment of utopia consists largely only in a repetition of the continually same 'today.' In other words, when it means for Wilhelm Busch "it's also beautiful somewhere else, and here I am at any rate," then this word begins to assume a horrifying meaning today in the realization of technological utopias, namely, that "and here I am at any rate" also takes possession of the "somewhere else," where the great Mister Pief\(^*\) with the great perspective has wished himself to be.

Krüger: Mr. Bloch, do you also believe that the depreciation of the term 'utopia' is connected to—how shall I put it?—"the perfection of the technological world?"

Ernst Bloch: Yes and no—it has something to do with it. The technological perfection is not so complete and stupendous as one thinks. It is limited only to a very select number of wish dreams. One could still add the very old wish to fly. If I recall correctly, Dehmel\(^*\) wrote a poem concerning this in which he said, "And to be as free as the birds"—the wish is in there, too. In other words, there is a residue. There is a great deal that is not fulfilled and made banal through the fulfillment—regardless of the deeper viewpoint that each realization brings a melancholy of fulfillment with it. So, the fulfillment is not yet real or imaginable or postulatable without residue. But it is not only this that brings about the depreciation of utopia. Incidentally, I believe that this depreciation is very old—the slogan "That's merely utopian thinking" reduced as depreciation to "castle in the clouds," to "wishful thinking" without any possibility for completion, to imagining and dreaming things in a banal sense—this depreciation is very old, and it is not our epoch that has brought it about. I do not know for sure, but it may be that our epoch has brought with it an 'upgrading' of the utopian—only it is not called this anymore. It is called 'science fiction' in technology; it is called grist to one's mill in the theology, in which the "principle of hope" that I have treated with great emphasis plays a role. It begins to play a role optatively with the "If only it were so," which overtakes the role of reality—something is really so and nothing else. All this is no longer called utopian; or if it is called utopian, it is associated with the old social utopias. But I believe that we live not very far from the topos of utopia, as far as the contents are concerned, and less far from utopia. At the very beginning Thomas More designated utopia as a place, an island in the distant South Seas. This designation underwent changes later so that it left space and entered time. Indeed, the utopians, especially those of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, transposed the wishland more into the future. In other words, there is a transformation of the topos from space into time. With Thomas More the wishland was still ready, on a distant island, but I am not there. On the other hand, when it is transposed into the future, not only am I not there, but utopia itself is also not with itself. This island does not even exist. But it is not something like nonsense or absolute fancy; rather it is not yet in the sense of a possibility; that it could be there if we could only do something for it. Not only if we travel there, but in that we travel there the island utopia arises out of the sea of the possible—utopia, but with new contents. I believe that in this sense utopia has not at all lost its validity in spite of the terrible banalization it has suffered and in spite of the task it has been assigned by a society—and here I would agree with my friend Adorno—that claims to be totally affluent and now already classless.

Adorno: Yes, I support very much what you have said, and I want to use the objection that you have implicitly raised to correct myself a little. It was not my intention to make technology and the sobriety that is allegedly connected to technology responsible for the strange shrinking of the utopian consciousness, but it appears that the matter concerns something much more: it refers to the opposition of specific technological accomplishments and innovations to the totality—in particular, to the social totality. Whatever utopia is, whatever can be imagined as utopia, this is the transformation of the totality. And the imagination of such a transformation of the totality is basically very different in all the so-called utopian accomplishments—which, incidentally, are all really like you say: very modest, very narrow. It seems to me that what people have lost subjectively in regard to consciousness is very simply the capability to imagine the totality as

* Chapter notes, which are cited by superior Arabic numerals, appear at the chapter's end.
something that could be completely different. That people are sworn
to this world as it is and have this blocked consciousness vis-à-vis
possibility, all this has a very deep cause, indeed, a cause that I would
think is very much connected exactly to the proximity of utopia, with
which you are concerned. My thesis about this would be that all
humans deep down, whether they admit this or not, know that it
would be possible or it could be different. Not only could they live
without hunger and probably without anxiety, but they could also
live as free human beings. At the same time, the social apparatus has
hardened itself against people, and thus, whatever appears before
their eyes all over the world as attainable possibility, as the evident
possibility of fulfillment, presents itself to them as radically impos­
sible. And when people universally say today what was once reserved
only for philistines in more harmless times, "Oh, that's just utopian;
oh, that's possible only in the land of Cockaigne. Basically that
shouldn't be like that at all," then I would say that this is due to the
situation compelling people to master the contradiction between the
evident possibility of fulfillment and the just as evident impossibility
of fulfillment only in this way, compelling them to identify themselves
with this impossibility and to make this improbability into their own
affair. In other words, to use Freud, they "identify themselves with
the aggressor" and say that this should not be, whereby they feel that
it is precisely this that should be, but they are prevented from attaining
it by a wicked spell cast over the world.

Krüger: Professor Bloch, I would like to ask the following question:
What is actually the content of utopias? Is it happiness? Is it fulfill­
ment? Is it—a word that has just come up in our discussion—simply
freedom? What is actually hoped for?

Bloch: For a long time utopias appeared exclusively as social utopias:
dreams of a better life. The title of Thomas More's book is De optimo
statu rei publicae deque nova insula Utopia, or On the Best Kind of State
and the New Island Utopia. The "optima res publica"—the best state—is
set by Thomas More as a goal. In other words, there is a transforma­
tion of the world to the greatest possible realization of happiness, of
social happiness. Nor is it the case that the utopias were without an
"itinerary" or "time schedule." With regard to their content, utopias
are dependent on social conditions. Thomas More, who lived during
the period when British imperialism was beginning, during the Eli­
zabethan period, set liberal conditions for the feeling among his
islanders. One hundred years later, during the time of Philip II and
the Spanish domination of Italy, during the atmosphere of the Galileo
Trial, Campanella conceived a countermodel to freedom in his Sun
State. He said that all conditions could only be brought to order if the
greatest possible order reigned, if everything is "patched up," as the
extremely sensible and well-known expression puts it. But the goal
of More and Campanella was always the realm of conscious dreaming,
one that is more or less objectively founded or at least founded in the
dream and not the completely senseless realm of daydreaming of a
better life. In addition, the technological utopias made their first
imprint in Campanella's work and then most clearly in Bacon's Nova
Atlantis. His 'Templum Salomonis' is the anticipation of a completed
Technical University, in which there are monstrous inventions, a
complete program of inventions. Yet, there is still a much older level
of utopias that we should not forget, that we least of all should not
forget—the fairy tale. The fairy tale is not only filled with social
utopia, in other words, with the utopia of the better life and justice,
but it is also filled with technological utopia, most of all in the oriental
fairy tales. In the fairy tale "The Magic Horse," from the Arabian
Nights, there is even a lever that controls the up and down of the magic
horse—this is a "helicopter." One can read the Arabian Nights in
many places as a manual for inventions. Bacon addressed this and
then set himself of from the fairy tale by saying that what he means,
the real magic, relates to the oldest wish-images of the fairy tale as the
deeds of Alexander relate to the deeds of King Arthur's Round Table.
Thus, the content of the utopian changes according to the social
situation. In the nineteenth century the connection to the society at
that time can be seen clearly, most clearly in the works of Saint-Simon
and Fourier, who was a great, exact, and sober analyst. He prophesied
the coming of monopoly as early as 1808 in his book Théorie des
quatre mouvements. In other words, in this case it is a negative utopia
that is there, too. The content changes, but an invariant of the
direction is there, psychologically expressed so to speak as longing,
completely without consideration at all for the content—a longing
that is the pervading and above all only honest quality of all human
beings. Now, however, the questions and qualifications begin: What
do I long for as optimal? Here one must "move out" of the "home
base" (Stammhaus) of the utopias, namely the social utopias, on ac-
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count of the totality, as you say, in order to see the other regions of utopia that do not have the name "technology." There is architecture that was never built but that was designed, wish architecture of great style. There is theater architecture, which was cheaply set up with cardboard and did not cost much when money was lacking and technology was not far advanced. In the Baroque Age, most of all in the Viennese Baroque Theater, there were tremendous buildings that could never be inhabited because they were built out of cardboard and illusion, but they nevertheless made an appearance. There are the medical utopias, which contain nothing less than the elimination of death—a completely foolish remote goal. But then there is something sober, like the elimination and relief of pain. Now, that is in truth much easier and has been accomplished with the invention of anesthesia. The goal is not only the healing of sickness, but this, too, is to be achieved—that people are healthier after an operation than they were before. In other words, there is a reconstruction of the organism in exactly the same way as there is a reconstruction of the state. Above all there is, as I said at the beginning, the utopian in religion. This is indeed the divine realm, that which appears at the end, or that which announces, that which the Messiah, which Christ brings—distant wish-images, with tremendous content and great profundity, which appear here, so that, I believe, one must also look at the social utopias and at what resounds in them and is set in motion by these wish-images. However, these kinds of wish-images can be discussed individually according to the degree to which present conditions allow for their realization—in other words, in space, in the topos of an objective-real possibility. The possibility is not treated poorly as a 'stepchild' among the categories for nothing and also not clearly named—the possibility ...

Adorno: ... even Hegel treats this poorly.

Bloch: Yes, even Hegel treats this poorly. He had to treat it poorly on account of this old notion: There is nothing possible that is not real. If it were not real, it would not be possible. In other words, the possibility is absolutely a subjective-reflective category in Hegel's writings.4

Adorno: That's why it gets a "slap in the face."

Bloch: And it gets a "slap in the face." But when the ocean of possibility is much greater than our customary land of reality, which one could thus name the present-at-hand (Zurhandenheit) without calling up associations—if I may beg your pardon ...

Adorno: Please!

Bloch: ... without placing stress on the "authenticity" (Eigentlichkeit), then we can see that the possibility has had a bad press. There is a very clear interest that has prevented the world from being changed into the possible, and it has been poorly treated and, as was mentioned, has been insufficiently brought into the philosophical range not to mention the insults it has received, which have run parallel to the insults directed at the utopian.

Adorno: Yes, and here I would like to return to the question posed by Mr. Krüger about the content of the utopian. I believe, Ernst, that you have unrolled a whole series of—how shall I put it—of very different types of utopian consciousness. That has a great deal to do with the topic because there is nothing like a single, fixable utopian content. When I talked about the "totality," I did not at all limit my thinking to the system of human relations, but I thought more about the fact that all categories can change themselves according to their own constituency. Thus I would say that what is essential about the concept of utopia is that it does not consist of a certain, single selected category that changes itself and from which everything constitutes itself, for example, in that one assumes that the category of happiness alone is the key to utopia.

Krüger: ... not even the category of freedom?

Adorno: Not even the category of freedom can be isolated. If it all depended on viewing the category of freedom alone as the key to utopia, then the content of idealism would really mean the same as utopia, for idealism seeks nothing else but the realization of freedom without actually including the realization of happiness in the process. It is thus within a context that all these categories appear and are connected. The category of happiness always has something wretched about it as isolated category and appears deceptive to the other categories. It would change itself just like, on the other hand, the category of freedom, too, which would then no longer be an end in itself and an end in itself of subjectivity (Innerlichkeit) but would have to fulfill itself.

To be sure, I believe—and it moved me very much, Ernst, that you
were the one who touched on this, for my own thinking has been circling around this point in recent times—that the question about the elimination of death is indeed the crucial point. This is the heart of the matter. It can be ascertained very easily; you only have to speak about the elimination of death some time with a so-called well-disposed person—I am borrowing this expression from Ulrich Sonnenmann, who coined and introduced it. Then you will get an immediate reaction, in the same way that a policeman would come right after you if you threw a stone at a police station. Yes, if death were eliminated, if people would no longer die, that would be the most terrible and most horrible thing. I would say that it is precisely this form of reaction that actually opposes the utopian consciousness most of the time. The identification with death is that which goes beyond the identification of people with the existing social conditions and in which they are extended.

Utopian consciousness means a consciousness for which the possibility that people no longer have to die does not have anything horrible about it, but is, on the contrary, that which one actually wants.

Moreover, it is very striking—you spoke about close-handedness (Zurhandenheit) before—it is very striking that Heidegger to a certain degree had already cast aspersion on the question about the possibility of an existence without death as a mere ontic question that concerns the end of existence (Daseinsende), and he was of the opinion that death, as it were, would retain its absolute, ontological, thus essential dignity only if death were ontically to disappear (that is, in the realm of the existing)—that this sanctification of death or making death an absolute in contemporary philosophy, which I at any rate regard as the absolute anti-utopia, is also the key category.

Thus I would say that there is no single category by which utopia allows itself to be named. But if one wants to see how this entire matter resolves itself, then this question is actually the most important.

Krüger: Mr. Bloch, would you accept what has been elaborated up to this point, that, to a certain degree, it is actually people’s fear of death, a fear that they must die, that is the most profound and also the most legitimate root of their utopian thinking?

Bloch: Yes. The concern with death appears in two areas: in one instance, in medicine, where it is practical, empirical, or vocational, so to speak; in the other, in religion. Christianity triumphed in the early centuries with the call, “I am the resurrection and the life!” It triumphed with the Sermon on the Mount and with eschatology. Indeed, death depicts the hardest counter-utopia. Nailing the coffin puts an end to all of our individual series of actions at the very least. In other words, it also depreciates the before.

And when now there is nothing else? There is a picture by Voltaire of despair—the total despair of a shipwrecked man who is swimming in the waves and struggling and squirming for his life when he receives the message that this ocean in which he finds himself does not have a shore but that death is completely in the now in which the shipwrecked man finds himself. That is why the striving of the swimmer will lead to nothing, for he will never land. It will always remain the same. To be sure, this strongest counter-utopia exists, and that must be said to make things more difficult. Otherwise, there would not be that Heideggerian ‘creature’ (Wesen) at all, if there were not something here in the reality that is unavoidable and has no history up till now and no change in the real process—thus, if this reality itself did not ward itself so extraordinarily from the test case.

And here we touch on the area of the feeling of freedom. It is related to the “dreams of the better life,” which portray the social utopias, but it also distinguishes itself from them. In the social utopias, in particular, the best possible communal living conditions are determined either through freedom or through order. Here freedom is a variable or auxiliary for the best possible life. Freedom as feeling does not appear in utopia but in natural law, and to be sure, in the liberal natural law of the eighteenth century in connection with the upright gait, in connection with human dignity, which is only guaranteed by freedom. William Tell and the dramas of Alfieri are filled with great freedom figures, who stand independently and cry out, “In tyrannos!” Here one finds natural law, and it also lies within the realm of objective and real possibility, but it is not the same as social utopia. In other words, there are two utopian parts: the social utopias as constructions of a condition in which there are no laboring and burdened people; and natural law, in which there are no humiliated and insulted people. It is the second one that I attempted to depict in my book Natural Law and Human Dignity. Now there is also a third. However, it is not the miracle but death, which is faith’s dearest child, and that is the best way to express it. Still, it is necessary to have a
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mystery to remove death from view. This means, then, the resurrection of Christ, that is, faith, or “Who will save me from the jaws of death?” as stated in the Bible, in the New Testament. This is transcendental. This is something we cannot do. So we need the help of baptism, Christ’s death, and resurrection. In the process the utopian is transcended in the choice of its possible means. And, nevertheless, it belongs to utopia.

Adorno: Yes, I believe that, too. Indeed, the matter here does not concern conceiving of the elimination of death as a scientific process in such a way that one crosses the threshold between organic and inorganic life through new discoveries. To be sure, I believe that without the notion of an unfettered life, freed from death, the idea of utopia, the idea of the utopia, cannot even be thought at all. On the other hand, there was something you alluded to about death that I would say was very correct. There is something profoundly contradictory in every utopia, namely, that it cannot be conceived at all without the elimination of death; this is inherent in the very thought. What I mean is the heaviness of death and everything that is connected to it. Wherever this is not included, where the threshold of death is not at the same time considered, there can actually be no utopia. And it seems to me that this has very heavy consequences for the theory of knowledge about utopia—if I may put it crassly: One may not cast a picture of utopia in a positive manner. Every attempt to describe or portray utopia in a simple way, i.e., it will be like this, would be an attempt to avoid the antinomy of death and to speak about the elimination of death as if death did not exist. That is perhaps the most profound reason, the metaphysical reason, why one can actually talk about utopia only in a negative way, as is demonstrated in great philosophical works by Hegel and, even more emphatically, Marx.

Bloch: “Negative” does not mean “in depreciation . . .”

Adorno: No, not “in the depreciation of utopia,” but only in the determined negation of that which because that is the only form in which death is also included, for death is nothing other than the power of that which merely is just as, on the other hand, it is also the attempt to go beyond it. And this is why I believe—all this is now very tentative—the commandment not to “depict” utopia or the commandment not to conceive certain utopias in detail as Hegel and Marx have . . .

Bloch: Hegel?

Adorno: Hegel did this insofar as he depreciated the world-reformer in principle and set the idea of the objective tendency in opposition—this is what Marx adopted directly from him—and the realization of the absolute. In other words, that which one could call utopia in Hegel’s works, or which one must call utopia in his youth, originated right at this moment. What is meant there is the prohibition of casting a picture of utopia actually for the sake of utopia, and that has a deep connection to the commandment, “Thou shalt not make a graven image!” This was also the defense that was actually intended against the cheap utopia, the false utopia, the utopia that can be bought.

Bloch: I agree with you completely. This leads us back again to the first actual question, so to speak, and the actual state of affairs where utopia becomes diffused, in that I portray it as being (seiend) or in that I portray it as achieved even if this is only in installments. As installment of having been achieved is already included when I can portray it in a book. Here it has at least become real already and, as you said, “cast into a picture.” One is thus deceived. It is diffused, and there is a reification of ephemeral or non-ephemeral tendencies, as if it were already more than being-in-tendency, as if the day were already there. Thus, the iconoclastic rebellion against such reification is now in this context completely correct. And displeasure must keep on its guard, for which death most certainly provides a continual motivation. Indeed, death is not “Now he must go,” as the old Schopenhauer said; rather it disturbs one constantly so that one cannot be satisfied, no matter how great the satisfaction is and no matter how many economic miracles and welfare states there are. But that continues to exist, an ‘it-should-not-be’ of the utopian, of the longing for a ‘coming-in-order’ or an ‘in general,’ where freedom would be, where everything would be right or together in a much deeper sense, a more comprehensive sense than the social utopia portrays it. Such yearning is present, and there is—to come back to death—the human fear of death, which is entirely different from the animal fear of death. In other words, there is this fear of death that is actually cast into a picture and is based on rich experience that humans have had.
and the feeling that multiple goals break down. For there is no such thing as utopia without multiple goals. In a non-teleological world there is no such thing. Mechanical materialism can have no utopia. Everything is present in it, mechanically present. Thus, the fact that there is such a sensitivity about an ‘it-should-be’ demonstrates that there is also utopia in this area where it has the most difficulty, and I believe, Teddy, that we are certainly in agreement here: the essential function of utopia is a critique of what is present. If we had not already gone beyond the barriers, we could not even perceive them as barriers.

Adorno: Yes, at any rate, utopia is essentially in the determined negation, in the determined negation of that which merely is, and by concretizing itself as something false, it always points at the same time to what should be.

Yesterday you quoted Spinoza in our discussion with the passage, “Verum index sui et falsi.” I have varied this a little in the sense of the dialectical principle of the determined negation and have said, Falsum—the false thing—index sui et veri. That means that the true thing determines itself via the false thing, or via that which makes itself falsely known. And insofar as we are not allowed to cast the picture of utopia, insofar as we do not know what the correct thing would be, we know exactly, to be sure, what the false thing is.

That is actually the only form in which utopia is given to us at all. But what I mean to say here—and perhaps we should talk about this, Ernst—this matter also has a very confounding aspect, for something terrible happens due to the fact that we are forbidden to cast a picture. To be precise, among that which should be definite, one imagines it to begin with as less definite the more it is stated only as something negative. But then—and this is probably even more frightening—the commandment against a concrete expression of utopia tends to defame the utopian consciousness and to engulf it. What is really important, however, is the will that it is different. And it is most definitely true that the horror that we are experiencing today in the East is partly connected to the fact that, as a result of what Marx in his own time criticized about the French utopians and Owen, the idea of utopia has actually disappeared completely from the conception of socialism. Thereby the apparatus, the how, the means of a socialist society have taken precedence over any possible content, for one is not allowed to say anything about the possible content. Thereby the theory of socialism that is decidedly hostile toward utopia now tends really to become a new ideology concerned with the domination of humankind. I believe I can remember the time when you had conflicts in Leipzig, when Ulbricht—I do not want to quote this because I am not sure that my memory is correct—made a statement against you at that time: Such a utopia cannot at all be realized. Now this was exactly a philistine phrase, i.e., that we do not want at all to realize it.

In contrast to all this, we should bear one thing in mind. If it is true that a life in freedom and happiness would be possible today, then this one thing would assume one of the theoretical forms of utopia for which I am certainly not duly qualified, and as far as I can see, neither are you. That is, neither of us can say what would be possible given the present standing of the forces of production—this can be said concretely, and this can be said without casting a picture of it, and this can be said without arbitrariness. If this is not said, if this picture cannot—I almost would like to say—appear within one’s grasp, then one basically does not know at all what the actual reason for the totality is, why the entire apparatus has been set in motion. Excuse me if I have taken the unexpected role of the attorney for the positive, but I believe that, without this element, one could do nothing in a phenomenology of the utopian consciousness.

Krüger: Mr. Bloch, may I ask you once again: Would you accept what Mr. Adorno has said about the utopian element having entirely disappeared from the socialism that rules the eastern world today?

Bloch: With the amendment that it has also disappeared in the West and that similar tendencies exist that reproduce the unity of the epoch despite such great contrasts.

Adorno: D’accord.
short or long; it was directed against the abstract utopians, who were
the forerunners, and who believed that one only had to speak to the
conscience of rich people and they would begin to saw off the branch
on which they were sitting. Marx objected to the over-estimation of
the people's intellect, an over-estimation that was characteristic of the
utopian socialists. In other words, interest played a role here as well
as the Hegelian look (Blick) for concreteness. This was surely neces-
sary as medicine against rampant speculative thinking, against the
rampant speculative spirit of that time. Without it, Das Kapital
(Capital) would probably never have been written and perhaps could
not have been written.

The turn against utopia that has been conditioned by the times has
certainly had terrible effects. Many of the terrible effects that have
arisen are due to the fact that Marx cast much too little of a picture,
for example, in literature, in art, in all possible matters of this kind.
Only the name Balzac appears; otherwise there is mainly empty space
instead of Marxist initiatives to reach a higher culture that would
have been possible. I consider this a condition that can be explained
historically and scientifically, and that at the moment when this
historical-scientific situation no longer lies before us, when we no
longer suffer from a superabundance of utopianism, it will become
devoid of meaning. The consequences that arise from this have been
terrible, for people in a completely different situation have simply
regurgitated Marx's statements in a literal sense.

It is from the Marxist viewpoint definitely necessary to act like a
detective and to trace and uncover what each case is about—without
any kind of positivism. By doing this, one can set things aright, but
one must not forget that other thing—the utopian. For the purpose of
the exercise is not the technocratic . . .

Krüger: What would the purpose of the exercise be?

Bloch: We talked before about the totality on which everything
depends. Why does one get up in the morning? How did such an
especially striking situation arise already right in the middle of the
nineteenth century enabling Wilhelm Raabe to write the following
sentence?: When I get up in the morning, my daily prayer is, grant me
today my illusion, my daily illusion. Due to the fact that illusions are
necessary, have become necessary for life in a world completely
devoid of a utopian conscience and utopian presentiment . . .

Adorno: The same motif also appears in Baudelaire's work where he
 glorified the lie in a very similar way, and yet, there are very few other
parallels between Baudelaire and Raabe.

Bloch: There would not have been a French Revolution, as Marx
stated, without the heroic illusions that natural law engendered. Of
course, they did not become real, and what did become real of them,
the free market of the bourgeoisie, is not at all that which was
dreamed of, though wished for, hoped, demanded, as utopia. Thus
now, if a world were to emerge that is hindered for apparent reasons,
but that is entirely possible, one could say, it is astonishing that it is
not—if such a world, in which hunger and immediate wants were
eliminated, entirely in contrast to death, if this world would finally
just “be allowed to breathe” and were set free, there would not only
be platitudes that would come out at the end and gray prose and a
complete lack of prospects and perspectives in regard to existence
here and over there, but there would also be freedom from earning
instead of freedom to earn, and this would provide some space for
such richly prospective doubt and the decisive incentive toward
utopia that is the meaning of Brecht’s short sentence, “Something’s
missing.” This sentence, which is in Mahagonny, is one of the most
profound sentences that Brecht ever wrote, and it is in two words.
What is this “something”? If it is not allowed to be cast in a picture,
then I shall portray it as in the process of being (seiend). But one should
not be allowed to eliminate it as if it really did not exist so that one
could say the following about it: “It’s about the sausage.” Therefore,
if all this is correct, I believe utopia cannot be removed from the world
in spite of everything, and even the technological, which must defi-

initely emerge and will be in the great realm of the utopian, will form
only small sectors. That is a geometrical picture, which does not have
any place here, but another picture can be found in the old peasant
saying, there is no dance before the meal. People must first fill their
stomachs, and then they can dance. That is a conditio sine qua non for
being able to talk earnestly about the other without it being used for
deception. Only when all the guests have sat down at the table can the
Messiah, can Christ come. Thus, Marxism in its entirety, even when
brought in in its most illuminating form and anticipated in its entire
realization, is only a condition for a life in freedom, life in happiness, life
in possible fulfillment, life with content.
Adorno: May I add a word? We have come strangely close to the ontological proof of God, Ernst . . .

Bloch: That surprises me!

Adorno: All of this comes from what you said when you used the phrase borrowed from Brecht—something’s missing—a phrase that we actually cannot have if seeds or ferment of what this phrase denotes were not possible.

Actually I would think that unless there is no kind of trace of truth in the ontological proof of God, that is, unless the element of its reality is already conveyed in the power of the concept itself, there could not only be no utopia but there could also not be any thinking.

Krüger: That is actually the concept I wanted to introduce to conclude our discussion. We already touched on it, Professor Adorno. We had already said that utopia refers to what is missing. So the question to pose at the end is, to what extent do human beings realize utopia? And actually here the word “hope” is due. Here we could use an explanation of what hope actually is and what it is not.

Bloch: In hope, the matter concerns perfection, and to that extent it concerns the ontological proof of God. But the most perfect creature is postulated by Anselm as something fixed that includes the most real at the same time. Such a tenet is not defensible. But what is true is that each and every criticism of imperfection, incompleteness, intolerance, and impatience already without a doubt presupposes the conception of, and longing for, a possible perfection. Otherwise, there would not be any imperfection if there were not something in the process that should not be there—if imperfection did not go around in the process, in particular, as a critical element. One thing is certainly against it, and once we take care of some misunderstandings, we shall be in agreement here: hope is the opposite of security. It is the opposite of naive optimism. The category of danger always within it. This hope is not confidence . . .

Krüger: Hope can be disappointed. However, hope still nails a flag on the mast, even in decline, in that the decline is not accepted, even when this decline is still very strong. Hope is not confidence. Hope is surrounded by dangers, and it is the consciousness of danger and at the same time the determined negation of that which continually makes the opposite of the hoped-for object possible.

Possibility is not hurray-patriotism. The opposite is also in the possible. The hindering element is also in the possible. The hindrance is implied in hope aside from the capacity to succeed. But I employ the word ‘process,’ which has many meanings—chemical, medical, legal, and religious. There would not be any process at all if there were not something that should not be so. In conclusion, I would like to quote a phrase, a very simple one, strangely enough from Oscar Wilde: “A map of the world that does not include Utopia is not even worth glancing at.”

Notes

1. The great Mister Pief is a character in Wilhelm Busch’s book Plisch und Plum (1882). Busch wrote the following poem about him: “Zugereist in diese Gegend/ Noch vie! mehr als sehr vermiigend/ In der Hand das Perspektiv/ Kam ein Mister namens Pief/ “Warum soll ich nicht beim Gehen”/ Sprach er, “in die Ferne sehen?/ Schön ist es anderswo/ Und hier bin ich sowieso.” (Just arrived in this region/Much more than very rich/In his hand a telescope/Came a mister by the name of Pief/“Why shouldn’t I look,”/Said he, “into the distance as I walk?/It’s also beautiful somewhere else/And here I am at any rate.”)

2. Richard Dehmel (1863–1920) was an important precursor of expressionism in Germany.

3. The trials of Galileo took place in Rome in 1615/16 and 1633.

4. The subjective-reflective category denotes the reflection of a subject in contrast to a category (matter) that is present in the “object” in the reality itself.

5. Zurhandenheit (present-at-hand) is a term developed by Heidegger to describe the things with which people deal in their daily lives, for example, instruments.


7. The true is the sign of itself and the false.

8. The false is the sign of itself and the correct.
Art and Utopia

The Creation of the Ornament

In the Early Days

We start, however, from the beginning. We are down and out and no longer know how to play. We have forgotten. Our hands no longer know how to construct things.

The flintstone had also been flattened in about the same way. All around us it seems as if craftsmanship had never existed and was never to be handed down. Instead, we paint again like savages, in the best sense of the early days, of the unsettled, the nonchalant, the concerned. Because dance masks were also carved in such a way. It must have been about that way when the primitive humans put their fetishes together, even if nothing but the need to talk about it has become the same again. So both are separated simultaneously and clearly and help us, force us to turn the cold instrument really cold, so that one realizes the goodly amount that still must be warmed.

Technological Coldness

At first, however, nearly everything looks empty to us.

But how could it be different and where should the vital, beautifully formed utensil come from when nobody knows anymore how to live permanently and has forgotten how to keep his home warm and solid?

But this is not merely due to trivial things. They are not based on the fact that the employer has become unknown and anonymous. Let us take, for instance, the study in the home as our point of focus. With the gainfully employed there is a set of needs, tasks, and graphic problems. He enters his room only in the evening to relax, read, or welcome male guests. Or he is a writer or a scholar, perhaps comparable to the Faustian dweller of the study. But, in fact, what is offered for sale or in all the designs remains hopelessly stuck in what is generally called the gentleman’s room decorated in a bourgeois way. Therefore, one could say that there is much greater room for purchase than the empty products and choices allow. So it is not so much the consumer but the producer to whom all the unattractive stuff refers. And it is not the producer alone but the machine that he uses that has the misery and incisive murder of imagination on its conscience; this murder of imagination forces all museums to terminate the holdings of applied art works with the 1840s.

The machine knew how to produce everything so lifeless and inhuman in detail, just the way our new housing districts usually are. Its actual goal is the bathroom and the toilet that are the most unquestionable and the most original accomplishments of this era, just as rococo furniture and the Gothic cathedral represented the decisive pieces of art of those epochs. But now washing-up reigns. Somehow water flows from every wall, and the magic of modern sanitary facilities merges imperceptibly as an a priori ready-made machine commodity into the precious products of the industry of that era.

One should, of course, think long enough and frugally. Even more since we have no choice, and the old craftsman will not come back. And we certainly do not want to select the new ones; their sight is so horrible that nothing can be grafted onto them. Often they are just the most shabby philistine scoundrels with all the characteristics of the middle class in decline, greedy, fraudulent, unreliable, impudent, and sloppy, who occupy the place of the distinguished old masters as small businessmen. But if they, too, are fighting a losing battle, then a human, so to speak, warm commodity production by machines cannot succeed either. The transition period and capitalism developed technology, at least in terms of skills and use, largely for the purpose of inexpensive mass production with high turnovers and big profits and not really, as pretended, to ease human labor or even to improve its results. We really do not know what seemed such a relief about the rattle of the looms, about the night shift, about the terrible pressure of
the constant rotation speed, about the derivation of pleasure experienced by an individual who always works only on parts and never can enjoy the comprehensive process, the finished products. We do not know what was eased or even improved in contrast to earlier production that was more accommodating with the home and workshop side by side and a small quantity of honestly produced hand-work. A totally different technology, not for profit but humanistic, would have to come, and a completely different technology for purely functional purposes, without any of the junk of commodity production and mechanical substitutes of the earlier artistic goods would have to be invented: relief should come and limits at the same time, transformation of the functional form of the machine's spirit, appearance of freed, purely expressive colorfulness and profusion, detached from finery, from the old luxury. All honor to the grand élan, but all that it generated, which is not itself servicable or functional (like locomotion or steel production)—the entire spewed-up garbage of static substitute products will be packed away one morning. And the exploitative means of production of these substitutes that destroy culture will have to stand together with the cannons in the same peculiar museums of pernicious legends. I repeat: certainly one should think long and hard and be concerned with industry, for here in this breathtaking step, in this acceleration, unrest, and enlargement of our circle of action, there are great spiritual and intellectual values ready to be put to use. But all this must be considered in terms of the technological that views the machine as a functional facilitation for relief and does not involve the flimsy mass stuff of the factories, or even the terrible desolation of a complete automation of the world.

But, if we delimit everything in this way, the cold instrument will not be questionable everywhere. Then, of course, there are times when hatred against the machine changes. Here Marx is right in regard to the socialist craftsmen. At the very least one would like to be thankful for the sober coldness, the solemn comfort, the usefulness and the functional as the honest future, as the major mission of the machine; one would like to be thankful in the name of the other for the expression freed from hardship and style. Loss of taste, the intended beginning of the primitive, that which is purely objective function no longer leads to the beautiful old land we were used to. But conscious functional technology might lead to significant liberation of art from style, from anachronistic stylization and also from empty functional form, for neither the consumer nor the manufacturer is the decisive factor alone in the enormous change of civilized visibility. Rather the machine must also be taken into account. And the machine as well is a link in the continuing chain; decay as well as hope are only the opposite appearances of the spirit that has moved on, one that has been threatened but perhaps also vanished into wider circles. The conditions of the potentiality of the machine and its pure application ultimately belong to the history of philosophy, closely connected to the conditions of the potentiality of an anti-luxurious expressionism.

Functional Form and Expressive Exuberance

Unfortunately, one pushes here and there from the bottom to emerge from the hardness. Basically it remains true: obstetric forceps have to be smooth, nothing less than a pair of sugar-tongs. So one tries to loosen everything with colors, no paste-ups, no need to prim with scabby or ulcerous replacements as it had been done before. Nevertheless, the plain rectangulars seem, as they are polished, to vanish already, glazed bricks mediate, attractive vistas might reappear at some point, factory wares are decked with flowers. But all this rarely happens anymore. It certainly does not happen anymore at the right end. The lost land is cultivated, but it only conceives and blossoms sparsely if at all. Its returns are little more than stones.

Indeed, it remains questionable whether artistic commercial things, individually decorated and luxurious, could ever again be created around us. After the rupture of a vital productive tradition, after the burst of power with which the machine commenced action and awaited the results—it was possible to create commercially beautiful things, the truly beautiful, the beauty of static instruments. Yet this success was not much more than colorfully painted concrete. Even in the most theoretical case, with the purity of material and the clearly constructed functional form, it seems that only the stylistic minimum is attainable in a large leap forward. That minimum showed in the first framework furniture even before all stylistic beauty. Thus, after the depletion of the great styles, it appeared in the Biedermeier Epoch one hundred years ago for the last time. It is not coincidental that most of all the sober designers, who are wanting in ideas, do not go beyond this. Concrete cannot be set in flames. It is sane in a different manner, and without it no useful modern house can be built.
And also the well-furnished machine aims to perform those tasks in a reduced amount of time whose artistic honor emanated from their difficulties, their size— as Ruskin taught us in his enchantingly sentimental way— and from the expression endowed in it by human hands. There will never be any expressionist houses built if one attaches great importance to unified form. It is impossible to produce all of the rectangular shiny functional forms in an abundantly ornamental way, to break up and cover the firm windows, elevators, desks, the telephones with Lehbruck’s, with Archipenko’s curves. The only contiguity, and in this instance only a seeming one, lies in places for celebrations, in exhibition halls, in the theater, particularly when this space, as it is with Poelzig, shines onto the stage itself, into the separated magic of its semblance. And also the dome seems to be this space, as it is with Poelzig, shines onto the stage itself, into the architectural spirit, as one can see. This is why the expressionistic abundance. The flashing of fierce and enigmatic signs, a strange atmosphere of this epoch that are unskillful, without style, but expressive and distinct, works that have nothing in common with the objet d’art of masterful jewelry or with so-called artistic enjoyment. This is the way to take that Klee and also Marc wanted to demonstrate. And it is the same goddess who contributes the need for the applied arts, the technically enormous and successful relief, the expressionistic abundance. The flashing of fierce and enigmatic signs, a sudden encounter of all ways in that overgrown, inconspicuous side-path that turned into the main road of human development, that was also the clandestine direction that already allowed Karlstadt, Savonarola, and the other iconoclasts’ rage against the eudaemonistic art that the secularized, stylistic Renaissance began— at random, but for reasons of the pure light, the undissembled expression, the broken compromise, the intellectual straightforwardness. Henceforth the arts remained aloof from use and abstained from the inferior call of taste, the pleasurable formation of style of the lower existence. 

Only when the functional form limits itself to its own doing will this other side reveal itself in a carefree and also open style. Comprehended release, comprehended discharge, cleansing what had been mixed up impurely with commercial life, with arts and crafts, with eudaemonistic style until now, all this comes together in a mutually beneficial way: marching separately, fighting united. The birth of integral technology and the birth of integral expressionism, accurately kept apart from each other, arise from the same magic: complete void of ornament on the one hand, utmost superabundance, ornamentation on the other hand, but both are variables of the same exodus. So, one should take the opportunity in an honest way and let the living change wherever it alone should do so. One says for good reasons that the oppressed Russian peasant must have been a saint to become a decent person at all. Or, according to Lukács, a modern architect needs the qualities of Michelangelo’s talent just to draw a table in a successfully beautiful manner. But it should be added that, like children or peasants, a dilettante, who is needy, pressed by the troubles of life, but whose talents cannot be compared to the least gifted of the old masters, can nevertheless create works due to the strange atmosphere of this epoch that are unskillful, without style, but expressive and distinct, works that have nothing in common with the objet d’art of masterful jewelry or with so-called artistic enjoyment. This is the way to take that Klee and also Marc wanted to demonstrate. And it is the same goddess who contributes the need for the applied arts, the technically enormous and successful relief, the expressionistic abundance. The flashing of fierce and enigmatic signs, a sudden encounter of all ways in that overgrown, inconspicuous side-path that turned into the main road of human development, that was also the clandestine direction that already allowed Karlstadt, Savonarola, and the other iconoclasts’ rage against the eudaemonistic art when the secularized, stylistic Renaissance began— at random, but for reasons of the pure light, the undissembled expression, the broken compromise, the intellectual straightforwardness. Henceforth the arts remained aloof from use and abstained from the inferior call of taste, the pleasurable formation of style of the lower existence. Big technology was to reign, an easing, cool, bright, democratic “luxury” for everybody, a reconstruction of the planet earth striving for the abolition of poverty, the hardship taken over by machines, centralized automation of the unessential, making leisure therefore...
possible. And great expression was to reign, decoration was to become profound again and to guarantee pure ornaments of solution to the voice of inner concern instead of the silence of outward care.

After the practical sphere is secured firmly enough from the aesthetic sphere in regard to confusions, compromises, shift, this is the place to point to an existing relationship, which already irritated all use in its own era, to point to a latent, savable, determined spiritual meaning within the history of applied arts. Also in this instance, of course, a chair is only meant to sit on; it merely refers to the resting person. And a statue is made to be looked at, or rather it rests upon itself, is concerned with its own glory, and is indifferent toward all relations that are part of the surrounding life. According to the changed perspective of the observer, to the process of rotation, the obvious, the psychologically and socially embedded difference between applied and nonapplied art is determined, that which makes for high art.

Everything ready for use, everything that remains floor and armchair, or, in other words, everything that is occupied by an actual self experiencing life, is categorized according to applied arts. In contrast, forms that draw one's gaze upward, that rise to the beams and remain above the work created by humans and thus are transformed into the throne or shrine for the body of something superior, something godlike, these forms are only occupied by the symbiotic self learning about the inner and therefore belong to high art. And since applied art works surround us usefully, it has always been their aim to be comfortably luxurious, to maintain elegant perfection and to attract style in terms of taste as well as in terms of conscious formation in accordance with objet d'art. It is one of the characteristics of the applied arts to stop certain elements of decoration and construction and stabilize them as time and measure, elements that exceed the applied arts by movements of expression. The entire middle epoch of classical Greece and half of the modern age, i.e., apart from the Baroque, the modern age has been framed in a “classic” way by the Renaissance and Empire, which have essentially prepared the arts only as pleasant, non-religious accompaniment of life, but not as the appeasement of spiritual states of misery, not as the consoling song of individualistic expression unconcerned about ugliness or beauty, not as the portrayal of the superior legend of redemption handed down to the people. Therefore, in this manner the difference between elegantly dressed-up service and high art is enormous—and it does not get less if the self, making use of it, can be in different places. What appears to the peasant as high art, the cavalier uses naturally as applied art, and many things that Louis XIV still possessed as the select commands of his personal absolutism and that emphasized his rule clearly seemed to have become and actually did become high art for later epochs. It was a high art that was significant and supposed to be mainly observed, for the social and the quasi-theological role of the self had declined. Yet, there is something decisive here that must be included: there is still something alive in and about the old chair that is not satisfied with comfort and points to something more than the mere person who may be resting in the chair. Tertium datur: There are Baroque armchairs that are too important for any use and turn the peculiar attitude, the quasi-removed mask of sitting down into something new, somewhat uncanny, like a fairy tale, a most peculiar line. It is not taste anymore, nor is it conscious, painstakingly stylized, selfrighteous immanent form, but an offprint from life is in preparation-reaching into a space where only the ultimate of pure art exists—it is already a signifying and descriptive sign, a seal of profundity and of daydream: painted as if the skin of, and carved as if the skeleton of a specter, of a spirit, of an inner figure had been transferred to it. Thus, the virtually luxurious instead of mystical purpose of Baroque insignia was only possible in times when thrones and altars mixed, when politicians formed a blasphemous alliance with the metaphysical, when Sun Kings and the theological majesty of the Roman-German Emperor emphasized ornamental art of an entirely different significance in a godlike manner. If we dissolve this alliance that was considered as such during those times by rethinking it with socialism and reformation in our minds, we would destroy this sacrilege: it would become immediately apparent that the truly great historical applied arts are earthly instruments and serve earthly purposes only in order to support the opulent, feudal, state church, pontifical state luxury, but even more—we must not forget the gains made in the modes of expression and the importance for architecture—they refer to a spiritual a priori of construction, of architecture, refer to the uselessness of building on earth for the sake of the big seal providing access to another world. Hence, this third aspect still exists between chair and statue, perhaps even above the statue: “applied arts” of a superior order; within it stretches a genuine, a transcending carpet of purely abstract form instead of the comfort-
able, quasi-stale, purely luxurious carpet of daily use, assembled from resting-places. In these other “applied arts,” which are firmly perceptible in a particularly expressionistic way, the linear, arabesque-like ornament occurs as an overture—as the genuine carpet and the pure form, as a more easily successful but thereafter exemplary corrective for the transcending form, for the seal, for the removed, multi-dimensional, transcending ornament of new painting, sculpture, and architecture. There is no danger anymore that Egypt’s dull world of stone, which is somehow intended from a constructive point of view, might effect the completely different kind of earnestness, the unearthly, expansive abstractness of expression. It is rather that a new exuberance appears that grants strongest, yes, most decisive participation in rememorizing the metaphysical and yet external ornament to Baroque—discredited by luxury—even to the dance masks, to the totems, to the carved joists, to the Gothic shrines that are much further in the past.

The Background of the Will to Art

We always liked to see ourselves as open-minded. Therefore, from the early days on, we began carving consistently. We worked with wood. One did not have to be skillful. Whatever impressed or worried people was exorcised by a few strokes or even in a right angle.

But the feeble body cannot live in isolation and reaches for a bowl. Thus came the instrument that had to be handy and convenient. The flintstone was smoothed on purpose, hence in a jagged way. The earthenware jug was molded to be handy. The material and the immediate purpose alone determined everything. That is a world of its own, and it leads increasingly to the outside, away from the expression of the inside, toward the material alien to the self. The inner measures were still incorporated into the earliest carvings, enlarged the arms and the eyes according to the rank given to them, and the will for magic that rose to the surface endowed our faraway face with masks. On the other hand, in the initial functional form, which was in accordance with the material, the path from the human to what belongs to the human has been abandoned. The stone, the structured clarity, therefore something initially Egyptian, something elemental again works in creative work.

Greek Is Pleasing

However, the vital artistic element, which was the purpose of our quest, does not rest; it moves. Thus, the fabrics and the pitchers were at least covered with bands and friendly clear lines. Some kind of frugally decorative life sprang up, a playful geometricizing regularity. But first of all, in a truly vivid empathy, the constructive functional dimension blossomed from underneath, the Greek style, whose traces can be found everywhere, even without any real mediation. The Greek smile was, of course, still social and moderate. It did not begin to rival the stone with inner splendor yet. Still, it wanted to be both, wanted to be vital and tamed, understanding and symmetrical, picturesque and architectonic at the same time and thus become pure “sculpture.” In its amphitheaters Greek art turned into a mere harmonized landscape. In its temples it turned into mere facade, into a eudaemonistic balance between life and strictness. This balance took place in front of the depth of both life and strictness, and thus it gained neither inner expression nor the power of outward space.

This is why one only enjoys what is beautiful and takes, uses what one likes. The shoots and the acanthus blossom; the tree stumps support the form. Elastic soft Ionic cushions are laid between column and entablature. But also egg-and-dart molding and fret lead their stricter line, lead through their quasi-inorganic quality, and the stone’s spirit is at least triumphant as symmetrical, as a harmless, nobly decorative kind of geometry. Hence, on the one hand, the Greek figure is so lively that Pygmalion wants it to be his lover, no matter whether it is made from ivory, silver, bronze, clay, marble, or even flesh. But, on the other hand, the figure is so well-balanced, so full of Euphrosyne (i.e., cheerfulness) and proportion that it meets the unity of the block halfway at least. That is why the Hellenic torsos make a better impression than the originals from which those parts were knocked off, which, according to the spirit of the material, had to be knocked off. The Venus de Milo is only “perfect” as a torso. In contrast, the damaged statue of Chephren, which had already given everything to the stone, and for completely different reasons the statue of an apostle in Reims, which truly arose from the material in its vitality, its wealth of expression, both these figures appear merely as debris in their state as torsos. They do not even allow for those non-artistic elegiac associations as ruins do. In a few words: Greece and the Renaissance, too,
stand on the same undevout, eudaemonistic, unserious, and undecisive ground. What is so considerably distorting about Dürer, who was so profoundly influenced by Italian art, is the combination of ruffled folds, angular features together with rectangular walls and doors. All this was mastered by the Greek style through an extremely peculiar decrease of richness and rectangularity at the same time. It became smooth, harmonic symmetry ante rem. The Greeks withdrew in that sense, arranged a world for themselves in which they could live, where they could evade the chaotic terrors but also the earnestness of decisions at any time. Here everything was subdued, mixed from the vegetal and the solid in such an Apollonian way that the calm weather of sheer beauty could develop, the shaped facade. Perhaps there was only something analogous to Greek Sophrosyne (i.e., composure) in the distant discipline with which an artist in China encompassed his much more extravagant and much more determined life lines. Greek Sophrosyne composed the form, the continuous cosmos so rapidly that even Chinese culture, to which wisdom in its most relevant form appeared as grace, was tactful, rhythmic, Tao-like, and also this culture was tempered after the fiery abundance of its own heroic-Orphic early days to become the luxurious, purely and simply aesthetic style. The Greeks remained alive even in the Christian Middle Ages, below all the Gothic glow, amidst all the most pervasive transcendentalism. Soon after this period the forms were to be rounded and no less beautiful, and, as painful as this development was, it was certain that everything would come to a pleasant, solemn end. The parish became the solid, independent, worldly-spiritual polis; the domes of the Thomistic doctrine was eminently aesthetic, balanced the world, even when such profound figures as ech, the bird of the souls, or ka, the personal protective spirit, the human genius reveal themselves from afar: still though, in all Egyptian figures and faces of that mystical growth that are the signs and agents of resurrection.

dominated, in the functional form as well as in the consciously stylizing will to art, the Egyptian rigidity operated as the danger of complete, uninterrupted construction at the end of any “style,” especially when it reached the serious point of composure or rest.

The Egyptian Will to Become like Stone

For as soon as we start to build the regular forms come up again. Nothing seems already so indelibly inscribed in gypsum as the power to make its worlds “Egyptian.” And the Egyptian strictness comes also constantly close to the Greek proportion, even if the feeble life ripples and warms itself. That is: the construction of the tertium comparationis evolves between functional form, style, and Egypt, even though the depths of the connections is extremely different. It is from these depths that the total facade arises, the recurrent functional form, form in general, the absolute spirit of stone, the ultimately unamiable geometry figuring as Egypt, as the total domination of inorganic nature over life. Also here man looks ahead but sees himself dying, hides in the grave. After death he comes to the nether world, which is the land the sun passes by night, or at the most, if he had lived a virtuous life and passed the judges of the dead, he comes to the Westerners, to the deceased and reanimated Osiris, the lord of the dead. But the departed one, the glance to the other side, never leaves the world, even when such profound figures as ech, the bird of the souls, or ka, the personal protective spirit, the human genius reveal themselves from afar: still though, in all Egyptian figures and faces of that mystical growth that are the signs and agents of resurrection. But the pyramid, the pylons, the Egyptian temple, god’s house continue in themselves the more strictly the purely inorganic landscape, they are life-denying, straight, cubical with an enormous fanaticism
of rigidity. And the interior of that architecture abandons everything that blossoms all the more, everything that is mortal but is nevertheless the inner realm of life. The pyramid is a shrine, as Hegel says, wherein a deceased dwells; the sanctuary of the innermost temple space is nothing but a tomb and between its walls the bark, the colossal statue of the cosmic god oppresses and overwhelms. Even if the look enters through increasingly smaller, darker rooms the most eerie chamber, its narrowness is not the inward of the human soul but merely the contrasting space, the paradoxical space for the more absolute oversized and statuary stone of the god, the god of the sun, Ra, the highest of all. He, who is always visible through figures of beasts and humans and through all the minor gods of Egypt, is in the spirit of an absolute astral myth. The secret of the Christian sanctuary is of a completely different kind and is far from proximity with the inorganic rigidity, far from proximity with the life-denying, macro-cosmic cubicity. Even the oversized Christos Pantokrator of the Byzantine apse bends over to the people. In the center of his creation he is a servant, the head of the human empire, and the most sublime sign disappears, is only visible as a miniature, as a distant figure of the dove of the holy spirit.

We said, though, that purpose and style, no matter how much the latter may demonstrate its false vitality, lead to the essence of stone. Or rather, to say it directly: even if the functional form, as a completely unartistic, purely negative random feature of cleanliness, does not come close to Greek style, certainly the nearest, which comes objectively after the functional form and represents it with a leap in the artistic realm: the kind of Biedermeier, as well as the topmost, which comes after the constructive style: the rigidity and cubicity of Egypt, are firmly close to Greek style, close to style in general. And Greek style is always situated between the kind of Biedermeier and Egypt in the eudaemonistic center. The one, which is the style of Biedermeier, is already noticeable in the earliest flintstone tools. It draws its pure, practical line through the styles of the Renaissance, Regency, Louis XVI, and Empire, only to remain finally, so to speak, on the bottom, after the gradual abolition of styles at the beginning of the nineteenth century. As stated before, I am talking about a stylistic minimum in general (that is why it can be combined with all styles). The other, the Egyptian, penetrated first the Aegeans and lastly the Empire style, with the formal opportunity of influencing Empire by the expeditions to the pyramids, and it forms, as Biedermeier represents the inferior limit against the non-artistic condition, the superior space of the transcendental relation of Greek style and, therefore, of style in general. But Egypt is continually betrayed by the functional form, when the latter does not limit itself and aspires to stylishness. This betrayal can only be avoided by maintaining life. It can be avoided only if the sober triangle of the gable, only if the pure roundness of the arch that is not only chosen from a worldly devoutness but also formed by the severity of death, only if the entire ambiguous symmetry of the Greek and the classic style in that fuzzy, homeless, shallow, abstract immanence are kept in their place. This immanence does not convert to Egypt, to the winterland, to the land of the dead, to the winter of the world, as it is called in the old occult scriptures, and does not convert to the place of the purely inorganic sphere of values, only due to its indecisiveness. For Egypt remains the notion as well as the fulfillment of complete, uninterrupted shape, of the meaningful construction and immanence of stone in general, dictated by the spirit of the material itself, not by stylizing efforts. Only Christian life penetrates the stone in a serious way. In this instance even the external space might become Gothic, and the angelic salutation in the gallery of the Church of Lorenz in Nuremberg had been created precisely to celebrate the space where it hangs, to make the space sing and to become the focus, particularly by hanging in the center, of the internal sounding of the church's spatial body. Whereas even in the Romanesque, Byzantine style, yes even in the horizontal Gothic style, a final, strange possibility of Egypt reoccurs, transferred from astrology to the open mysticism. It might reoccur wherever gravity and order still appear as essential substance of the figuration.

The Will to Become Gothic like Resurrection

But the inner life, as it drifts toward itself, glows again even more strongly. It makes its figures entangled, winding, placed in front of each other, piled on top of one another. Here it is important to remember the early days, to think constantly in terms of carving. One works with wood in order not to flatten anymore, not to immure with stone anymore. The inner essence exposes itself, and that which is curious, that which moves like something that is brewing, that which is scrolling becomes its unpretentious expression.
There already where nobody is yet, this vital clue smolders upward toward us. It is the same force that takes effect in lava, when molten lead is poured into cold water, in wood veining, and first and foremost in the quivering, bleeding, tattered, or curiously conglobate forms of the internal organs. Even today, African tribes keep their gods of life carved in wood, and their rituals are passed on in shafts, in rattles, in house beams, in thrones, and in idols. Their will for magic, their passion to transmute, to push their way into the upper realms of procreation produced, first of all, the mask, which elevates the progenitor daemonically, the always organic abstract totem and taboo. It suggests our far-off face, but Christ does not shine yet, only the glowing demon of life reigns in these creations of imagination, in these dark, sculptured systems of fertility and power—but this one does it absolutely. Even more so, Nordic as well as Oriental peoples never forgot the absoluteness of the carving, of the wood, and of the spirit of life. In the art during the time of the mass migration and in a fundamental way during the Gothic period the Nordic-Oriental symbiosis took place, the organic, psychical yearning manifested itself truly as the ornament. We know the entanglements, the serpentine bodies, the sea horses, the dragon heads bent toward each other in the Nordic lineations. There is nothing that could be compared with this uncanny pathos derived from the vitalization of the inorganic. Therefore, if now there is still any possible salvation behind the rejected, worn-out styles, then it can only happen through the resumption of those almost completely forgotten organic lines. Everything that shall blossom and luxuriate has to learn from those pre-Gothic figures. There are no whirls, no extravagances, and no architectural power with the profound organic rules of those extravagances that would not breathe with their heads in the wild, cloudy air of this organity filled with all the drifting, all the musical presentiments, and the infinite. Moreover, since Worringer’s fortunate and pregnant presentation there is no more doubt that in these ornaments of intertwined signs and animals the concealed Gothic style is simultaneously given in the Baroque and its aftermath.

But the foliage amalgamates much more differently than the Greek. The most curious decoration covers all surfaces and ripples over the walls in order to dissolve them. We saw that the Greek line only met the living in its outward appearance, being the unmysterious, epidermal organic chemistry visible to everybody, and in its light, elegant rhythm determined by an internally animated harmony. We saw that the Egyptian line is only rigidity, and Sophrosyne (i.e., composure) turns into geometry. This is true insofar that here only stone is thought of when dealing with stone, and not the flesh. This is according to the spirit of the material, which is the spirit of the desert or of the Alpine landscape and that of the enormous temple of the dead of inorganic nature. Led by the form of the stone, the mysterious-unmysterious way goes outward for the Egyptians. Here, in this eternal pattern of all absolute constructive architecture, a long forgotten groundwater rises, a belief in granite and the cosmology emerges that quasi-unfolds and turns back many pages; it happens in a way that a kind of mineralogy of higher ranks, a kind of second natural philosophy connects to the sphere of the arts above all souls.

The Gothic line, on the other hand, retains the hearth. This line is restless and uncanny like its figures: the bulges, the serpents, the animal heads, the watercourses, a tangled criss-cross and twitching where the amniotic fluid and the incubation heat sit, and the womb of all pains, all lusts, all births, and of all organic images begin to speak. Only the Gothic line carries such a central fire within itself in which the most profound organic and the most profound spiritual essence come to maturity. But this is very alien to the feeble Greek life, and at the same time it is the most extreme contrast to the Egyptians as the masters of death, as the gaze to which god appears more as a wall than as a hand, as the land that Joseph had been sold to, as the spirit of the cosmic myth devoid of people, deserted by the Jews in order to see the huge grape from Canaan. Egypt stratifies, the Gothic style creates; Egypt remodels the cosmic system in a constructive way, the Gothic style moves productively and symbolically toward the embrace, toward the winding realm of the souls. Egypt, which grasped the stone, is the spirit of the grave, the spirit of the total form, of total constructiveness by reasons of the material. Egypt is the perfect descriptive formal sign (Formzeichen) for a perfect clarity of strangeness, a clarity of pressure and death. Egypt is the artistic congruence with the tomb, with the cosmic myth. The Gothic style, on the other hand, which grasped life, is the spirit of resurrection, the spirit of the serving formula, of lowered, fragmented constructiveness, as a merely inferior definition of the object. The Gothic style is the imperfect expressive-descriptive seal (Siegelzeichen) for an imperfect collective and fundamental secret, for a symbolic ornament and symbolism that is in itself
fermenting, incomplete, functional. The Gothic style is the artistic indication of the living space (Lebensraum), of a storm brewing on the horizon of the problems of collectivity as of all approaches to the myth of logos. Therefore, it is not the bright and shallow-structured Greek line, but only the Gothic one, the essentially adventurous, long-sighted, functional line that is the perfect life, that is the ultimately pure realm of the functional form, the free spirit of the expressive movement as such. And, only in conjunction with the Gothic line could Egypt, the constructed stone, during all meta-stylistic periods, be cut through. Thereby the Romanesque, the Byzantine, the Arab-Indian, the Gothic, and also the Baroque, except for its non-inherent stylistics, represent the rising triumph of the organic exuberance over the crystal.

This is why the inward human being cannot want anything else but the infinite line without being self-deceptive. Along this line, woodland wanders into the desert, into the crystal and degrades the crystal to a mere accessory that has cooled down a long time ago. In its first Nordic existence the infinite line had been a wild blossoming and pushing away from everything without knowing where to go; only as the Gothic line did it become in this sense the real, not only organic, but organic-spiritual transcendence, when the great, the all determining star of the Son of Man could rise up above its swelling flood. The means of stone are broken up, the total formality, the important, absolute constructiveness is dismissed, is a solely strengthening, supporting formula for the work (garment, clustered columns, cross-vault), or at most the form is the prius of the foreground in the observed Gothic object (arbitrary stretching, denaturalization of the model, winding openwork). A most profound object reigns, expressed in organic abstract seals, in the sense, that Gothic art—and whatever is connected with it in a wider sense—gives expression to an exodus of the outward material otherwise only known in music.

Hence it works and ferments in the stones to bloom together with us, to have our life. For it is impossible to vent oneself if one builds with the forces of the Son of Man within oneself. The law had not yet created a great man, but freedom hatches the true giants and extremities. Thus, it is also Egypt itself—as the model of the sealed storage of the false god—that leads toward those figures where, finally, the organic, the organic abstraction takes place again. In no other way can the inside that is turned outward, the organic of a higher level, happen, the excessive ornament and the gentle reunion of the self that will become the Ego: as the Gothic entelechy of all the fine arts. The human being, not the sun, not geomantics and astrology, but the human being in his deepest inwardness, as Christ, became here the alchemistic measure of all constructive things. If one looks long enough into it, into that blossoming and its passage, one can see the flow of one's innermost soul, and the soul wanders around in there, turns toward itself. Here, that nice warmth prevails wherein the living soul does not suffocate. It is the warmth of the beloved and the light that emanates from the flower, from the lucerne of all maidens, the nice warmth wherein the living soul is overcome by humility and devotion and is held in the Gothic Virgin's arms, just like the child Jesus himself. The Gothic will to decorate the choir, the entire inner space in a more and more glorified way, the Gothic high tendency in all its abundance dematerializes all mass: now all the craving pictorial plates found their place; mesh and loops of unprecedented stonemasonry and craftsmanship proliferate in crockets and chapters, the glowing windows are pierced with tracery and rose, curvature arises, not vaults, and a dynamic pathos is pushing upward with all parts. In the nave it pushes additionally into the depths of the choir. Sin and atonement, the glistening devil's beauty and the realm of the gentle, bent, calm soul meet so closely in the enormous dome of figures. They turn it into the petrified journey of the Christian adventure. But light also searches, spreads, and burns in these stones, in this ornamented column, in this house of the human heart. We are not repudiated anywhere, nor is more than a reflexive tribute given to the inclusive force of the material. The wall is defeated. The colorful windows open up into an unmeasured landscape. We are standing amidst love, surrounded by the heavenly legions, yes, the robes and mien of the saints assume all space comprising forces within themselves. It is a ship made of stone. It is a second ark of Noah flying toward God. The spire of the steeple transforms into the finial as the mystical larynx that receives the word of the Son. And above all these miracles—"How does each step take me far!"—"That is a profound secret, time turned into space!"—above all this endless tangle of lines, there is Mary smiling so sweetly and wisely as if the graves would light up, as if the distant mystical chambers would prepare themselves and stand illuminated as the restitutio in integrum for the most inferior being. Many things are certainly not formal about these domes, about these creations
of domes after the human figure, but it is the informality between our hearts and our world. Here, too, the breakthrough wants to succeed: the forms of the only art yet to come, of the organic, of the metapsychic eidetic kind present themselves and culminate all together in the lineament of the secret human form. The only essential aprioristic object of that art is the yet still flowing, indeterminate decoration and signature of immediate humanity.

The Picture of the Innermost Form

This may be the way to get home, and therefore it seemed so desirable that the point, which is supposed to be effected by the new, colorful seriousness, is not technically masked. But also concealment should not happen anymore because of a different strictness, an all too random disregard for the excitement within one’s own heritage, within impressionism—its unrest and its loosening of formality that took place after all, its subjectivizing of the conception of the world that at least exists, even if it is placed low and has remained reflexive and devoid of expression. The path of the modern age, of the erupted, irresistible, mystical nominalism has to be followed to the end if the Egyptian shall not reinstall itself as something hollow, false, and empty, or if even the equally past affiliation of the historical Gothic shall be reinstalled instead of the aprioristic.

For one thing separates us distinctly and strongly from that. We have become more ego-like, more searching, more homeless, assuming more of a form like a current. Our collective self appears so near. The sap of the new compositional expressions springs much less than before from the fountains of means, of the life of form. Forming is no longer the only support. It is not even particularly necessary anymore to speak, to make oneself visible.

In this way, somehow, even colors have retreated, the primary ambition in painting: to create with it, to translate it, to model with it. Although one would like to see clearly and possibly without relief, it is not important. Kokoschka paints in gray, in brown, in cloudy purple, with all the colors of the earth. And when Marc and Kandinsky use more distinct colors, we no longer enjoy the color as such. It is rather for the substance of excitation that the purest and crassest luminosity is chosen and composed. Marc is even aiming at a theory of harmonious colors, and on the whole, an indulgence in clear, surfaceless local colors becomes fashionable instead of atmospheric dimness. It is that peculiar emotional value of the single color as well as the emotional value of its compositions: hate, ardor, wrath, love, secrecy, representative of the entire aura, in which the landscape of the soul is situated. Thus, Däubler has this to say about those colors: “Remnants from violent yellow reach into blue inevitabilities.” This is the coloring power and, at the same time, the limit of its being chosen, for here the color has to serve like it never did before. The color may be diffused in its own pleasure, in its own life of form as often as desired. And the pure picturesque, which many impressionists—in an unclear manner—prided themselves to have found again, necessarily withdraws facing the necessity for statement.

It is true though that the process of drawing forcefully pushes us forward again. The sightful devotion to the quick, vulgar impression is over. And it cannot be denied, since Marées, thinking in drawing, the new way of thinking in planes, seems certainly to aim even deeper. Indeed, the less we look for color as such, the less we look for the line as such, unless it is dense and in itself expressively condensing and not a clearly outlining one. Take, for instance, Rousseau or Kandinsky, when trembling or horse riding appears as a short, imposing curve, or when revenge appears as a zigzag arrow form, or benevolence as a blossoming flower. The contours sharpen and are charged in a sculptural way in Archipenko’s work. Or, when Däubler translates Boccioni’s striding people into language, they are no longer stationary people who can occasionally step out, but they stride, and the striding dominates the body, which comprehends itself as something physical: “Knuckles want to burst out, soles of shoes drag space, breasts symbolize the human microcosmos snuggling between the signs of the zodiac. In our heads we roll an entire world through our veins: the human is much too much, but with our motion we irresistibly break into living geometries. On our shoulders and thighs we carry a not yet expressed crystallization of space into our striding rhythm.” Thinking in planes. The new thinking in cubes and curves also seems to tend to go deeper when in the most direct depiction. And cubism is the consequential expression of that new, eternal space magic. It started with the simple partitioning of things, with turning up their nonvisible planes into the picture plane. One of Picasso’s early paintings bears the revealing title: Partitioned Violin, but soon, what had merely been played with and tried out changed into real
experience. The peculiar attraction appeared that belongs to the partitioned plane, that can already be sensed in the layout plans of sites and buildings. It is the attraction of active, subtle partitioning, of balanced scales, and of the bare, active linear creature as such. It is the conscious will to recreate the knowledge of size, volume, and weight, to recreate the knowledge of that secret attraction, of order, and of statics that regulate the space as a combination of quadratic and cubistic equilibria, even against the slightly deadened planar arabesques. This is something different from and more fruitful than pure functional form and engineering, or the final false memories of the Egyptian death chamber, and it points toward the heavens. Not only Marées and Cézanne are painters who think in terms of space, but the Sistine Madonna also has some cubistic spatial life, as Techter points out so courageously and so correctly. Cézanne referred to spatial thinking in his famous words about the cone, the cylinder, and the sphere within the composition of a painting. The Sistine Madonna, on the other hand, seems to be surrounded by spatial relationships that resound from far away. Moreover, it seems to be surrounded by a heavenly spatiality that is virtually passed on to us. Things are cubistic not only because they are well-proportioned—according to which every picture of the past and more so those of absolute styles would figure as cubistic—but the curiously mixed Raphael reveals more in that direction than can be studied with the much more important Leonardo. In fact, objects are not only placed in space, but space is placed within things. Space is active and may certainly form an unprecedented foundation like the Roman Pantheon or even the Gothic cathedrals.

But it is, indeed, true that many things are inferior, and one should continue to disrupt the drawing. The drawing can and must provide stability so that the transitoriness of a great, widely resounding feeling, not only a momentous one, has its physical position. The drawing may also signify a minimal concrete definition as all suggestive forms do. But much too often, the already obvious has lived and consolidated itself here in a quadratic way and disguised its banal world with cartons, boxes, and cubes from which there is little to learn even if there seems to be so many layers. Besides, the futuristic movement—being the craze for ecstasy, dynamics, and an all-pervasive timeliness—disturbs the circles of the vain and burned out old forces, particularly in the cubistic works, just like Kokoschka and Picasso destroy the preceding belief in plain color. The motion of the line and the least expected meaning of fairy tales in the drawing occur and thus transposes the cubistic or otherwise useful statuarism to a mediating, solidifying formula or to the form of the most minimal definition of the objects in the course of expressionist ego formation, of expressionist ego projections. That motion is the strongest reaction against all that which seems to be self-composed, against all that which seems to be self-portraiture and "absolute" painting. Furthermore, if we usually have the impression that certain well-known remains, an eye, a violin clef, or just a number are continually in the cubistic picture, as if against their own will, then Braque, Derain, and other painters of the Picasso school are able to show that we wish to see, through all distractions of cubism, these object-like relations especially in the most abstract predicate of the art work—thus not only in the beginning, as the last witnesses of an emotional farewell to the world, and not only personal. Therefore, these curious pictures can be understood as the most agonizing auxiliary constructions whose concentrated abstractness will again be unraveled in a newly gained object relation and object symbolism. Hence, if one wants to create a more profound form of depiction than painting reaching into itself, into the spatial silence—as the cubists cultivated it against the excitement and elementality of impressionism—then it is totally impossible in a literal sense as pure composition made out of planes and weights. And on a large scale it is only conceivable insofar as it is impossible to conceive of a cube as ornament. In other words, a cube is not continuous but seeks to serve as figure of significance. That is the case according to a structured transparency that only begins with the realization of form without being identical with it or even being somewhat continuously accompanied by its stylishness and its joy in constructing. The latter is still present in impressionism, and in cubism it is again a totally geometrically hypertrophic joy in constructing.

But then, can we build at all and erect arches above us? Here, the introduction of a higher level of thinking in arts and crafts must ultimately prove successful as it has already been shown above with the Baroque chairs. It is likely that, according to the extraordinary quest for expression, certain conversions in the practical arts and then in sculpting and architecture will triumph over pure painting. Hence, under a future aspect a Sheraton chair or the unworldly curve of some
Baroque cabinets may contain more aesthetic features and meaning than the sweetest Perugino or even more prominent illusions in art history. This future aspect we find beyond the practical arts in a narrower, socially dominated sense and in the sense of style, and thus also beyond the ornament in a one-dimensional, non-transcendental sense. Many things already point in that direction, and those that are long gone or have never been understood reemerge—like the dance masks, the totems, the carved house beams, the ornamental strips, the tabernacles, like the notion of a sculpture—also carved out from the inside—of a Negro, Nordic, Gothic, Baroque kind, the nameless body of a sculpture that figures as architecture. Architecture, which is threatened so much by clear-cutting and functional form and has even lost that way, is thus always investigated as the interior of the home space that is supposed to be sculpturally well-cultivated, supposed to be approximated. With painting and with sculpture, architecture continues to figure in a more humane construction space, and more so today, as the anticipating expression of a “tat twam asi”—there you are. This architecture figures as self-encounter within the painted objects and encounter with them, close to music that is no longer frozen.

Our Secret Creative Signature

So we search for the creator who allows us to confront ourselves in a pure form, who allows us to encounter ourselves. His fresh gaze kneads things so they are no longer recognizable, and, like a swimmer, like a cyclone, it whirs right through whatever is there. Flowing water, old trees, or even a dark mountainous lake are beautiful to behold. But it is enough to possess all these things in nature where we can enjoy all that is unreproducible about air, about the estimation of spatial openness and other things much better than all the art lover’s pleasures can ever communicate. Besides, the slide and the movie have been excellent substitutes as photographic means for those people who want the impression of nature without any deformation. The cinematograph is the best art gallery, the substitute for all the great general art exhibitions of the world. That should be clear to all those who, with each expressionist painting, must ask what it represents, and thus hell can shrink and resemble a street corner for their eyes, that become a mere photographic plate. Already since van Gogh, this had clearly changed. Suddenly we are involved, and this involvement is exactly what is painted. Certainly, it is still a visible tumult. There are still railings, underpasses, iron beams, brick walls, but suddenly all that overlaps in a curious way. All at once the discarded cornerstone strikes sparks. That which is drawn in all appearances, that which is incomprehensibly related and lost to us, that which is near, faraway, like the Sais quality of the world, all this comes to light in van Gogh’s paintings as it does in Strindberg’s work, too. In Cézanne the expressionist revolution is clear as well—perhaps even more profound than in van Gogh’s work—more hidden and somewhat covered by the strong, purely picturesque facade that makes Cézanne the last great modern stylist. For these are no longer fruit, not even fruit molded out of color. Rather, all that is conceivable in life is to be found here, and, if those fruits should fall down to the ground, the world would be set on fire. Cézanne’s still lifes are already a kind of heroic landscape, and moreover, they are charged with mystic weight and a yet unknown, nameless mythology. There is good reason why the still life appears at this point in time, for the ceremonial art works of the past and present world that depicted closed cultures have come to an end. And no romantic pattern or even a theosophy of the zodiac can bring them back again. In contrast, the “still life” has not only remained practically the sole picturesque object, but is and can be superior to all cultures in its escapism and intensification of small things. After all, the new tableau is at best only a seal and not an ideogram totally identical with our innermost intensity, with our innermost collective and basic secrets like the conceivable ultimate music and the conceivable ultimate metaphysics. In particular, the object becomes a mask in this new tableau, becomes an “idea,” turns into a deformed, denaturalized mode of a secret excitement moving toward some goal. The human soul and the essence of the world converge. Suddenly I can see my eyes, my place, my position: I am that drawer myself and the fish, the kind of fish lying in the drawer. For the gradation vanishes; the path between the picturesque subject and the depicted object becomes level. The object is to be reborn and recapture its essence, its inner principle, its potentiality of all of us and not only its objective substantiality. My dancing, my morning stars sing and all transparent formations of this
kind reach the same egoistic architectural horizon and also the same subjective ornament of their entelechy: to be a trace, a sign of Makanthrops, to be a seal of its secret figure, of its hidden emotional Jerusalem.

Here, nothing is left that can be borrowed from the outside. The soul does not have to accept alien prescriptions anymore. But the soul’s own need is strong enough to attract the cortex and marks to assume its own position, the pictures only become our own emergence at a different place. Van Gogh still pointed the way out of ourselves. In his work the objects still speak, no matter how intensely they speak. But it seems as if they speak by themselves and not as an echo of the human. Then suddenly we alone resound from the objects. It is different with the new expressionism, where only the human being exists as a Kaspar Hauser figure using the objects merely as memory signs of its stubborn origins or as punctuation marks for keeping or storing its continuous recollection. Thus, the objects become the dwellers of their own interior. And, when the visual world seems to decay anyway, to empty out its own spirit, seems to become non-categorical, then the sounds of the invisible world want to turn into pictures in and about the visual world: the disappearing facade; the creative and deepest eruption; universal subjectivism within the object, behind the object, as an object itself whereby the external object disappears to the degree that it reappears equal to one of the five hundred gods of Canton in the temple of the hidden inner Canton. Here, the strangely familiar pictures may appear to us as mirrors of the earth in which we see our future like the masked ornaments of our innermost form, like the adequate fulfillment that has finally been recognized, like the self-presence of eternal meaning, of the egos, of the we, of the tat tvam asi, of our glory vibrating in secrecy, of our hidden godly existence. That is the same as the yearning finally to see the human face. Thus, there are no other paths of dreams for the magic picture than those on which the Sesenheim experience might happen, where one comes to meet oneself. And no other relation to an object can occur than one that reflects the secret contour of the human face all over the world and connects the most abstract organic with the longing for our hearts, for the richness of the self-encounter.

The Conscious and Known Activity within the Not-Yet-Conscious, the Utopian Function

The intended look ahead is finicky, not dreary. This look requires in advance that the presentiment be sane and also not be gloomy as if it were stuck in the basement. That presentiment, in its dusk, is not meant to become aware although it may be directed toward tomorrow. Since science is absent, something hysterical and something superstitious have settled here as well. Certain psychic conditions like clairvoyance, the second sight, and that kind have been described as presentiments, or, more precisely, stupor. But that is degeneracy, whereas the real presentiment, of course, cannot reach down nor does it want to. Given that the so-called second sight still exists, something tricky is inherent; there is also a proximity to cramping and other endowments that do not provide much hope. Such things belong to that ailing sensitivity (the sensitivity of an open wound) that, in legitimate cases, only anticipates a change in weather, but here it pretends to anticipate fires and deaths. And here it fits the genuinely unconscious, deteriorated, atavistic, the expired of this kind of presentiment so that it refers only to events that already happened a thousand times before, that will happen tomorrow or the day after time and again. After all, a somnambulistic presentiment might be, at best, some degenerate leftover of the animal instincts, but here the instinct is really stereotypical. The animal’s activities, although appropriate for a particular condition, become immediately contradictory as soon as the animal is confronted with a new situation and is forced to anticipate something unprecedented. The egg deposit, the nest building, the migration are carried out by instinct as if a precise “knowledge” of the future existed. But it is merely the million-year-old fate of the species where that future takes place. It is a substantially old, automatic future. Therefore, it is the mental false one where nothing new happens. Many things about the physical instinct were stuck in the basement. That presentiment, as substantial as it might be, will make it hardly possible to relearn the activity that, in the animal instinct of precaution, seems to possess the past, the present, and the future still tightly