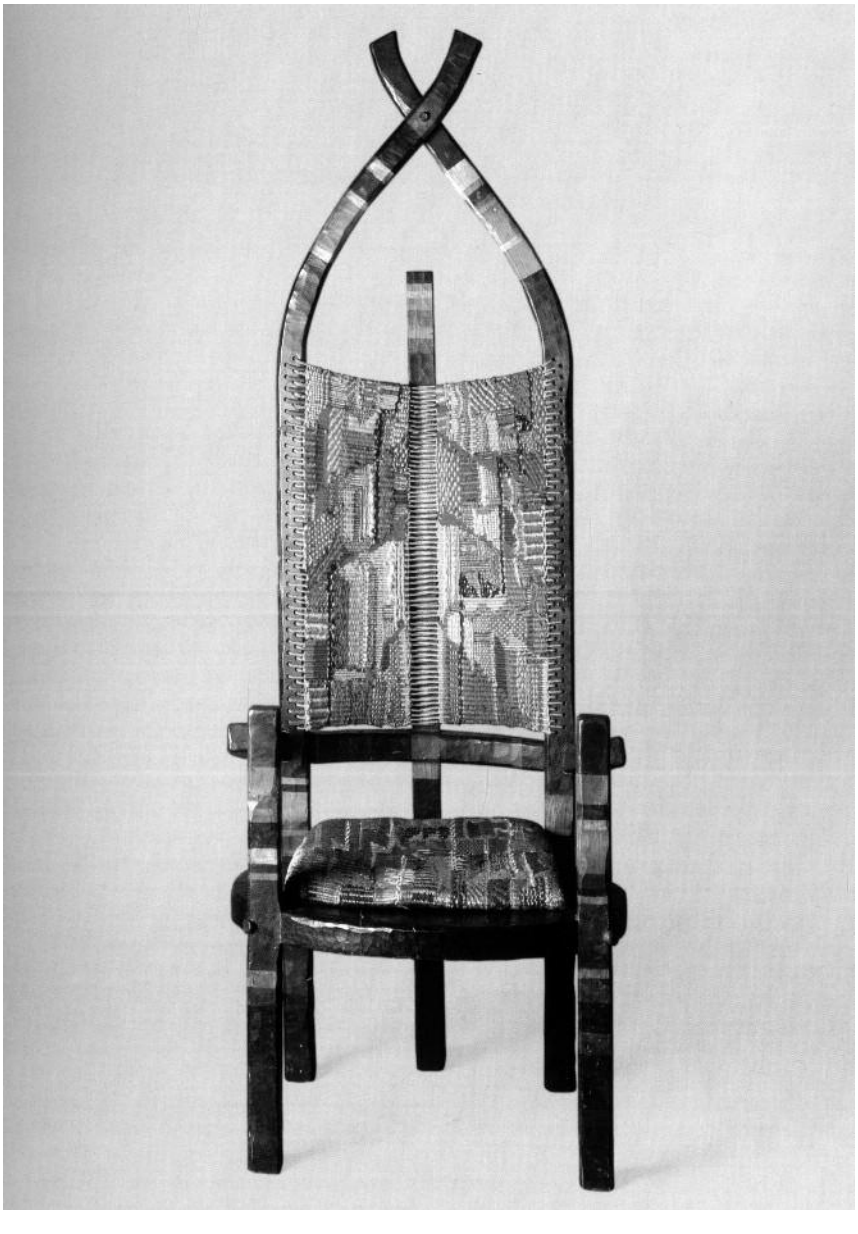
Marcel Breuer and Gunta Stölzl. African Chair, 1921. Bauhaus-Archiv, Berlin.



The African Chair or the Charismatic Object

MARIA STAVRINAKI

On November 7, 1917, the sociologist Max Weber gave a speech to Munich University students on the theme "Science as a Vocation," inviting them to come to terms with what he called the "inescapable condition of our historical situation."[1] The tragic fate of the modern era was the fact that it was irreversibly subjected to the laws of calculation and abstract spirit. For Weber, the rationalization and intellectualization inherent in modernity—crystallized in science and technology but crossing all fields of human activity—were necessarily incompatible with any kind of recourse to "magical means in order to master or implore the spirits, as did the savage, for whom such mysterious powers existed. Technical means and calculations perform the service."[2] Weber's intellectual position was characterized by a sober and ascetic heroism. His intention was to counter what seemed to him to be "a crowd phenomenon"; namely, the frenetic quest for "redemption from rationalism and intellectualism of science" and the craving of youth for religion.[3]

An integral aspect of this quest for redemption was its organization, in each instance, around a "charismatic" figure whose authority was grounded in his presumed extraordinary qualities, both self-attributed and recognized by others.[4] Endorsing the role of a prophet or of a chief, the various versions of the charismatic personality offered to youth *Weltanschauungen*—philosophies of life or world-views—to believe in. The coherence and all-embracing character of these *Weltanschauungen* promised to put an end to doubts resulting from rational analysis and to restore the "authentic" character of experience. In those tormented times, while the industrial war was entering into its most critical phase and resistance to official political authorities was becoming more and more evident in Germany, prophets of every kind were legion.[5] In his speech to an audience of young students, Weber, a teacher himself, insisted on his own profession. He attempted to show that science's vocation did not consist in the propagation of any values or recipes for life but of the simple elucidation of the critical and thus rational methods of specialized, value-free knowledge.

Two years after Weber's speech, in April 1919, the Bauhaus was founded in Weimar. In the meantime, Germany had lost the war, and

the Spartacist uprising, which had broken out in November 1918, had been brutally suppressed after a pact was reached between the Social Democrats and the extreme right. Walter Gropius would often repeat that the Bauhaus was created in order to do its part in healing the double German catastrophe: the long and lost war, as well as the social division stemming from revolution. In one of his numerous texts of that period, the Bauhaus director wrote, "The ruined world—visible and invisible—will be resuscitated from our brains and from our hands."[6] In many respects, the vocation of the Bauhaus turned out to be considerably different from the teaching vocation as defended by Weber two years earlier. Bauhaus founding principles included the abolition of specialization in favor of the restoration of "lost" unity, the critique of "narrow" and "rigid" rationalism in favor of the stimulation of feeling and the flowering of life, and the radical rejection of technology.[7] If the Bauhaus constituted the absolute counterexample of Weberian teaching, this was mainly because its pedagogical object was art and its agents were artists. Since romanticism, art—whose defenders underlined its perceptive nature that was capable of embodying abstract ideas and aiming straight at affect—had been systematically considered a privileged instrument for the mastery of the dissolving forces that rational modernity exercised in the fields of religion and politics. In response to the problem of the disintegration of Christianity, many artists attempted to give form to some sort of the divine. It was as if they could reenact the dogma of Incarnation that was losing the meaning it used to have for Christianity, following a process that Marcel Gauchet has brilliantly analyzed.[8] Incarnation as they viewed it was sometimes religious, sometimes political, and often both. Many artists conceived of their works as prefigurations of a future society, or at least as sources of energy that could be mobilized toward the construction of a future collectivity that would overcome the political confusion and what Claude Lefort has called the democratic decentering and disembodiment of the modern era.[9] In the Germany of 1919, this function of art—both religious and political—seemed more relevant than ever.

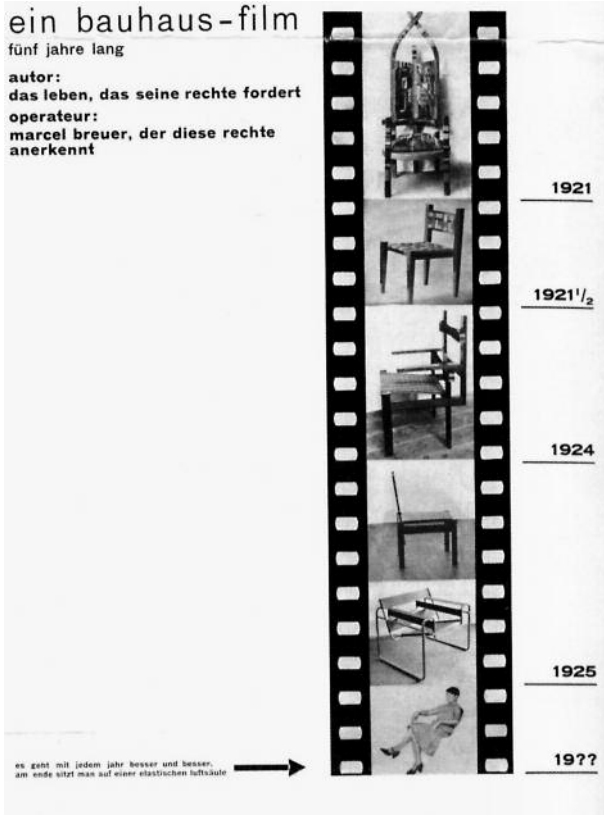
The Bauhaus promised the young people willing to join it that it would make them forget the outside world's contradictions so that they could learn methods that would create a feeling of "totality" in the realm of life and art. This project was formulated not only in a plethora of texts, collective or personal, official or private. Above all, the Bauhaus can be demonstrated in all its singularity and concreteness in the objects it produced. Nonetheless, no single object better incorporates the redemptive vocation of the early Bauhaus than the African Chair created by Marcel Breuer in collaboration with Gunta Stölzl in 1921. For no other object has absorbed, as this chair has in its

Marcel Breuer. *A Bauhaus Film*, 1926. Photomontage published in the journal *Bauhaus*, no. 1, 1926.

very form and detail, the constant performance of "charisma" at the school. Furthermore, both Breuer and Stölzl are exemplary figures of the Bauhaus. Former students of Johannes Itten, they later assumed the role of teachers themselves. This fact implicates a circular model of transmission of knowledge and teaching experience, which corresponds to the redemptive ambitions of the school.

I. A Frontal Object

Breuer's African Chair is also referred to as the "Romantic Chair" in the meeting minutes of the *Meisterrat* (council of masters) of the Weimar Bauhaus.[10] Christopher Wilk recently reminded us that the title "African Chair" did not appear before 1949, when Marcel Breuer himself used it in his conversations with Peter Blake.[11] A photographic interpretation of the African Chair appeared some years after its creation in Weimar. In 1926, in the euphoria of his invention of the tubular-steel chair, Breuer conceived a photomontage titled *A Bauhaus Film*. With this work he intended to show, through the vertical juxtaposition of the images composing the photomontage, the heroic evolution of his objects since his first involvement with the Bauhaus; that is, their development from heavy, self-enclosed forms made by his hand to the dematerialized, open forms produced by his mind but reproduced by technology.[12] The African Chair, in wood and fabric, is the first object of the *Film* and the only one to be photographed frontally. All the other objects—even the body of the woman comfortably suspended in midair in the last image of the *Film*—are photographed either diagonally or in profile.[13] The very form of the chair requires this frontal view and position because of its high back with a vertical axis that culminates in a kind of crowning at the top and runs down like a spine, ending as a fifth foot at the base. These elements contribute to the emphatic verticality of the African Chair, giving it the character of a throne. Endowed with an astonishing self-sufficiency, this throne emits an undeniable authority. In sum, the African Chair has a metonymic function that explains its frontal position: it signifies the prestigious subject to which it is virtually destined, but also the charismatic subject under whose influence it was made.[14]



The chair's primitivist character especially reinforces its hieratic and presti-

gious appearance. Its wood structure was engraved and painted by Breuer. Special holes were pierced in the frame so that Gunta Stölzl could weave her textile directly onto it.[15] According to Wilk, the form of the African Chair did not refer to any specific tribal model and even bore, as Peter Blake was the first to mention, some Hungarian formal properties.[16] Wilk mentions as a further source of the African Chair the primitivism of expressionist painters and the interest of the artists of *Die Brücke* in wood engraving. The "tactile preference" of a painter such as Ernst Ludwig Kirchner was the common basis of both his interest in "gothic" and his exotic primitivism, a conjunction one also observes in the early Bauhaus.[17] Why was this conjunction possible, and what function did it assume in the Bauhaus? The primitivist aspect of this "throne" betrays a longing for traditional communities (*Gemeinschaften*), for their imagined "organic" political and social identity and the "authentic" experience they were supposed to offer to their members.[18] Endowed with a chief, rites, and a supposedly "genuine" artistic tradition, the idealized remote community—remote either temporally, somewhere in the Middle Ages, or geographically, at an unspecified "placeless" primitive location—was the reversed image of modern society (*Gesellschaft*). Modern charisma was conceived as a rupture with the present, the paradox consisting in the fact that it claimed the capacity to restore traditional values, the only values presumed to be authentic, precisely because it was devoid of any traditional or hereditary legitimacy. As a design pretending to have "authenticity," as a metonymy of the "chief," and as an object having a strong ritualistic character, the African Chair turns out to be the quintessence of a charismatic object. For these reasons it epitomizes the teaching of Breuer and Stölzl's teacher, Itten.

II. Absorption and Empathy

Itten's teaching—in the framework of his *Vorkurs* (Preliminary Course) and the carpentry workshop that he directed (which Breuer joined upon his arrival at the Bauhaus in 1920)—was founded on the imperative of the *experience* of materials and works of art. Opposed to the principle of intellectual transmission because of its mediated and supposedly abstract character, Itten's teaching perfectly corresponded to the process that Weber had explained as the reversal of the Platonic paradigm of the "cave." For Plato, immediate, embodied life produced shadows and illusory truths, as Weber argued, but

> [t]oday youth feels rather the reverse: the intellectual constructions of science constitute an unreal realm of artificial abstractions, which with their bony hands seek to grasp the blood-and-the-sap of true life without ever catching up with it. But here in life, in

Johannes Itten.
***Lithography with a Figural Theme*,**
1919. Bauhaus-Archiv, Berlin.

> what for Plato was the play of shadows on the walls of the cave, genuine reality is pulsating; and the rest are derivatives of life, lifeless ghosts, and nothing else.[19]

This vitalist premise was at the origin of Itten's endorsement of *Einfühlung* (empathy) as an active means to knowledge. Explained by theoreticians from Robert Vischer and Heinrich Wölfflin to Theodor Lipps as the projection of the living and willing ego in the object of its perception, empathy signified the enlivening of the object, the abolition of its division from the subject, and thus the immediacy of their unity.[20] Itten's "empathetic" approach to the creation and reception of the artwork had a clear compensatory function. His students and colleagues recounted the various techniques he employed to make students feel, in their body, the different materials or the "vital" rhythm found in the works of the Old Masters. Itten wrote, "To experience a work of art means to re-experience it; means to awaken the essential in it, to bring the living quality which is inherent in its form to independent life."[21] His own empathetic mode of creation was described in a letter by Paul Klee: "After walking to and fro several times Itten approaches the easel with a drawing board and scribbling pad. He picks up a piece of charcoal, his body tenses up as if becoming charged with energy, and then, suddenly goes into action—once, twice."[22] While Klee insisted on the fact that Itten was drawing with his whole body, feeling in his nerves and muscles the tension and distention of his lines, several other Bauhäusler recalled his projective posture in front of paintings, as if he wanted to project himself into them. The common point of these recollections was Itten's need to identify with his object and his will to abolish any kind of exteriority to the self. Itten's radically contemplative attitude in front of the work of art was described as being close to the mystical descriptions of the ecstatic exit of the soul from the body and its confusion with the divine. In his theorization of the "cult value" of art in the essay "The Work of Art in the Age of Its Technological Reproducibility," Walter Benjamin would point out a certain shifting of this value taking place as a reaction against the complex secularized process of modernity: from its initial function as a simple *means* of pure magical and religious experience, art became a religion *itself*.[23] In both cases, the "cult value" of art was linked to the contemplative state of reception and to the absorption of the

subject into the work of art. Itten instilled precisely this absorption in his students during his courses.

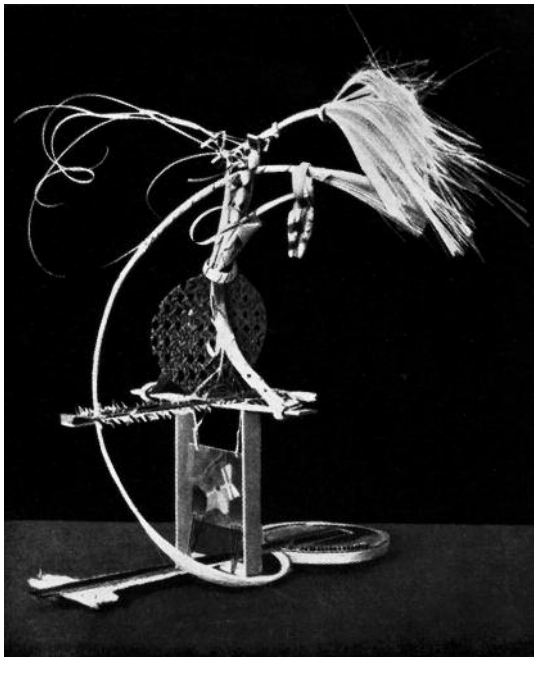
The emphasis placed upon the tactility of materials, in opposition to their purely optical appreciation, as well as the strong synesthetic reference in the work of Itten, are in accordance with his general conception of teaching as a source of a "total experience."[24] Revealing in this regard is Itten's recollection of his students feverishly searching in their grandmothers' belongings for haptic "materials" for their exercises:

> The students had to feel these sequences of textures with fingertips, their eyes closed. . . . While solving these tasks, the students were gripped by an almost feverish activity of composition. They began to rummage through their grandmothers' chests of drawers for the treasures hoarded for a lifetime, through kitchens and cellars; they ransacked the artisans' workshops, the rubbish dumps of factories and building sites. The whole environment was rediscovered.[25]

Itten's students searched in vain for traces of authentic, *palpable* experience, even if it was not their own. Itten's description of his students' quests to kitchens and cellars where heterogeneous objects were accumulated is not a simple anecdote but has the value of a structural paradigm: the quests reflect the muddled search for a *Weltanschauungen* and an ersatz religion. Moreover, this interpretation does not contradict Itten's primitivist argument that the search for materials was a means to rediscover the environment through the reenhancing of perception. Both interpretations reveal the same problem; namely, that "experience" was urgently needed.

III. The Historicist "Full" and the Primitivist "Empty": The Two Faces of the Poverty of Experience

What was really at stake at the Bauhaus in terms of the central concept of "experience" can be grasped with the help of Benjamin's reflections from the 1930s. The concept of *Erfahrung* (experience) and its loss either openly or latently structures his essays of those years—from the "Theories of German Fascism" and the "Storyteller" to the several versions of the "Artwork" essay. However, the main text in which Benjamin analyzed this theme is "Experience and Poverty" (Erfahrung und Armut, 1933).[26] By *Erfahrung* he meant experience that was sharable, both synchronically and diachronically, both hori-



zontally and vertically. Such a collective experience was not only common to contemporaries but also inheritable (e.g., in the form of proverbs or tales). *Erfahrung*'s authority was mainly founded on its "traditional" character, yet this authority progressively weakened until World War I fatally disabled it.

> No, this much is clear: experience has fallen in value, amid a generation which from 1914 to 1918 had to experience some of the most monstrous events in the history of the world. Perhaps this is less remarkable than it appears. Wasn't it noticed at the time how many people returned from the front in silence? Not richer but poorer in communicable experience? . . . No, there was nothing remarkable about that. For never has experience been contradicted more thoroughly: strategic experience has been contravened by positional warfare; economic experience, by the inflation; physical experience, by hunger; moral experiences, by the ruling powers. A generation that had gone to school in horse drawn street-cars now stood in the open air, amid a landscape in which nothing was the same except the clouds and, at its center, in a force field of destructive torrents and explosions, the tiny, fragile human body.[27]

The misery of the experience of the trenches, the *Fronterlebnis*, would indelibly mark the lives of an entire generation. This war erased any lasting illusion of heroism for the modern subject.[28] The soldiers were subjected to the effects of the industrial war; they could take no initiative in it. In the rational, disenchanted war, it was impossible for the soldier to perceive the battle plan, just as it was impossible for a worker to have a total vision of the industrial productive process. More generally, the war refuted established truths and defensive strategies adopted by the historical subject in order to soften the experience of urban modernity.[29] Tragedy in the "era of technical reproducibility" turned out to be simply devoid of meaning. Precisely because of its dreadful character, the war experience had condemned its subjects to muteness. The missions of institutions such as the Bauhaus denied this negativity, substituting for it a supposedly primordial "source" of creation, "innocent" of history, creating a situation in which the subject was called to draw upon his or her authentic *vocation* and, by the same means, the fundamental, timeless principles of creation. And, yet, the Bauhaus's "primitivism" was the mere updating of the very historicism it believed itself to be combating. Benjamin perceived this paradoxical affinity between the historicist "full" and the primitive "empty": their common ground was the poverty they tried to conceal and their incapacity to deal with their own age. First, the idea that "total visions" were subjected, through their pro-

Mordekai Bronstein. Material study from Itten's preliminary course, ca. 1920. Wood, thread, and other materials. Whereabouts unknown.

liferation, to the same inflation process as money, was for Benjamin the reverse side of the poverty of experience:

> With this tremendous development of technology, a completely new poverty has descended on mankind. And the reverse side of this poverty is the oppressive wealth of ideas that has been spread among people, or rather has swamped them entirely—ideas that have come with the revival of astrology and the wisdom of Yoga, Christian Science and chiromancy, vegetarianism and gnosis, scholasticism and spiritualism.[30]

Weber described the same phenomenon in his 1917 lecture:

> Never as yet has a new prophecy emerged . . . by way of the need of some modern intellectuals to furnish their souls with; so to speak, guaranteed genuine antiques. In doing so, they happen to remember that religion has belonged among such antiques; and of all things religion is what they do not possess. By way of substitute, however, they play at decorating a sort of domestic chapel with small sacred images from all over the world.[31]

The historicist specter haunts Weber's description: the importance of *Weltanschauungen* "from all over the world" for furnishing empty souls reproduced the gestures of nineteenth-century architectural eclecticism.[32] Benjamin made this affinity explicit:

> Where it all leads when that experience is simulated or obtained by underhanded means is something that has become clear to us from the horrific mishmash of styles and ideologies produced during the last century—too clear for us not to think it a matter of honesty to declare our bankruptcy.[33]

Gropius, too, wrote on the theme of "poverty." In his brief article "New Building" (Neues Bauen, 1920), he proposed, and not for the last time, the politically fatal idealist dissociation between the material and the spiritual levels of history.[34] This dissociation allowed Gropius to argue that Germany was called to prove its spiritual richness precisely because of its material poverty. Crucially, this formulation reproduced, in an attempt to nullify it, the reversal inherent in the war experience as explained by Benjamin. If for Benjamin the dreadful character of the war reduced experience to silence, for Gropius the opposite was true. Germany should articulate the *first* word and thus found an inaugural discourse: "The catastrophe that war and revolution have caused in the country has destroyed our richness, *but our spiritual forces have increased in inverse proportion to it*."[35] Hence, Germany's national culpability and humiliation was converted into a kind of spiritual "capital" or "credit"—the moral task of humanity's salvation.

Wood turned out to be an ideal symbol. This "modest" material, the only one available for construction after the "catastrophe," was also seen as a "primordial" or "primitive" material. This primitiveness had numerous significances. Wood was viewed as a raw material, emanating directly from nature and without need of any mediation or further elaboration. Wood was implicated as the first material used for human construction. Favorable to every art, wood was aligned with universal creation, before any particularization. But above all, Gropius determined, "Wood is appropriate to the primitive beginnings of our newly developing life."[36] Gropius considered wood's primitivism to be the most appropriate means to fight against historicism: "*But the new era also needs a new form*. We have to rediscover wood [*wieder neu erleben*], to feel it, to give it form in accordance with our own sensibility, without imitating old forms, which do not correspond to us anymore."[37] The African Chair is the product of this urge to "feel" and "rediscover" the expressive potential of wood, as well as of fabric weaving. But, whereas the African Chair personifies the rejection of past historical styles, its tribal or agrarian primitivism leads to its failure as an expression of the Bauhaus's "own" sensibility or identity.

IV. The Politics of Interiority

For Gropius—also for Itten—the process of the exploration of wood's expressive potential was analogous to, and the instrument of, the development of the subject's own sensibility. In February 1919, Gropius wrote to Karl Ernst Osthaus of the need to ignore the real world in favor of constructing a separate, inner one with the hopes of achieving unity through the "deepening" of one's own personality.[38] He echoed the ideal of a subjective, autonomous *Bildung* (formation) crucial in German thought since the era of Weimar classicism in philosophy and the various arts.[39] The concept of *Bildung* had developed in the last four decades of the eighteenth century as a reaction against the cultural model of French classicism and the evolutionist, teleological philosophy of history of the Enlightenment.[40] Since Johann Gottfried Herder, German thought fabricated piece by piece the concept of the narrow, schematic "form" of classic *imitatio* to which it opposed the vision of form as a living process. From the beginning, *Bildung* was an inextricably aesthetic and ontological process; its invention responded to Germany's urgent political need to invent a national identity, with France as its radical other.[41] This task was systematically conceived of as a cultural not a political matter. The founders of Weimar classicism—Goethe, Schiller, and Humboldt—outlined the idea of the free, organic development of the supposed core of personality but understood it as having to be independent of constraining external political conditions. The subjective autoformation

of Weimar classicism, in its Olympian detachment from the torment of history, was a reaction to the political fragmentation caused by the French Revolution and, above all, by the Terror.

After the Spartacist uprising, an analogous mechanism was set up by the Bauhaus in Weimar. Epistemologically, the rejected "rigid," "mechanical," or "abstract" knowledge (these terms represent commonly used pejorative adjectives in organicist discourse) no longer designated universalist Enlightenment thought but rather its more recent avatars, positivism and materialism. Between the cosmopolitan classicism of Weimar, which fabricated an autonomous bourgeois conception of the subject, and the foundation of the Bauhaus, the *völkisch* ideology of *Gemeinschaft* had been anchored in German intellectual circles, especially from the last quarter of the nineteenth century onward. Nevertheless, Gropius was able to reconcile humanist tradition *and* populist ideology. They shared the same organic and aesthetic conception of the self, which was supposed to develop within the limits of subjective *Innerlichkeit* (interiority) and to be opposed, as such, to politics.[42] Similarly, in his *Reflections of a Nonpolitical Man* (1918), Thomas Mann founded his repudiation of politics on this *Innerlichkeit*. Politics was thought of as "democratic" and appropriate to French civilization, in contrast to the inward German nature.[43]

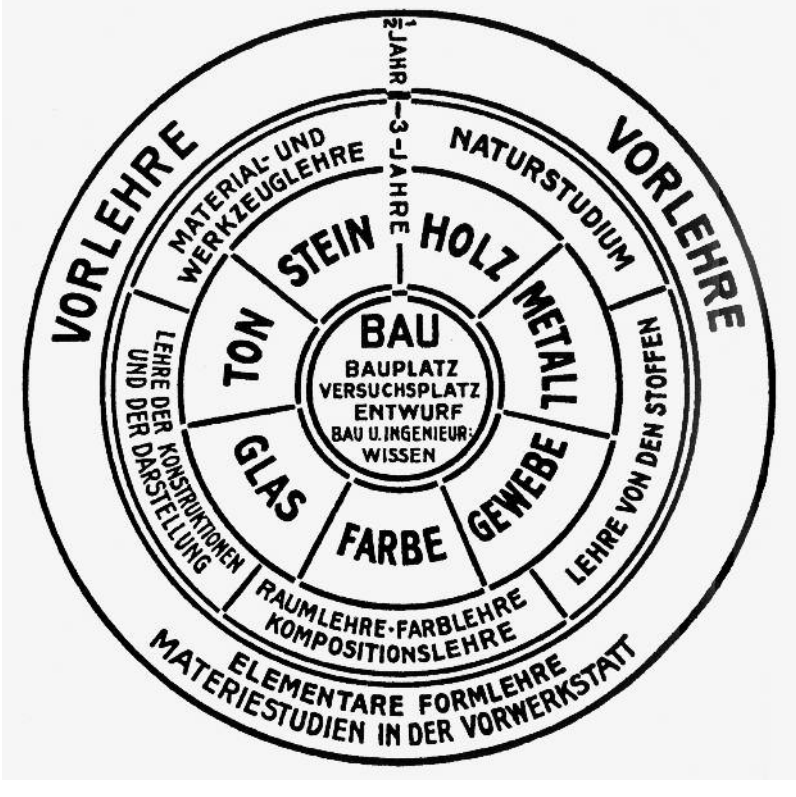
What the Bauhaus historiography has not noted is that Gropius conceived of the school as an alternative structure to political parties and national assemblies. Both of these represented specific political structures that emerged as integral parts of political liberalism. Through the year 1919, as a leader of the *Arbeitsrat für Kunst* and at the Bauhaus, Gropius regularly expressed his quest for a politics as large as life.[44] Through his vision of an embodied, direct politics, he did not simply attack the cynicism of politicians but disputed, more profoundly, the validity of the representation principle inherent in parliamentarism, as well as Marxist materialism's concept of class struggle. Gropius rejected two main aspects of parliamentary democracy: its "mediated," passive character (the representation of the many by the few); and its illusory and formal nature. Gropius wrote, "Every work of commission loses in freshness and radicalism. All that is parliamentary bears the core of death and is of no use to the artist."[45] Ultimately—and this is a generally expressionist phenomenon—Gropius identified in parliamentarism the political equivalent of aesthetic "mimesis," understood as the mechanical reproduction of an already existing reality. At the same time, he was even more opposed to Marxism because of its presumptions about revolution: its belief that the latter can emerge only from material structures, that its advent is inherent in history's blind necessity, and that its unique subject can be only the proletariat. What parliamentary politics and revolutionary

Walter Gropius. Diagram of the study courses at the Bauhaus. Published in Gropius, *Idee und Aufbau des Staatlichen Bauhauses Weimar*, 1923.

Marxism share is their faith that "poor" reality, despite its imperfections, is capable of engendering its own change. For the expressionist Gropius, however, this is a spiritual task and, as such, is unquestionably one for artists. Artists were seen as above social classes and above political parties—*unparteisch* according to Bruno Taut; this was the steadfast conviction shared by most activists of the "spirit" during and after the Spartacist uprising.[46]

Gropius conceived of the organic, spiritual community of the Bauhaus as a countermodel to historical reality itself, which was not simply disenchanted but literally torn to pieces by the action of politically antagonistic forces. In this regard, the Bauhaus took part in a complex European phenomenon: the tendency, more or less affirmative, of many individual artists and movements to create a postwar "sacred union" as an indispensable means either to preserve or to reawaken a national unity, one that would transcend social belonging and political convictions.[47] The task of the Bauhaus was to restore the notion of the "core," the ontological "center" of both individuals and the community. The pedagogical, curricular diagram that Gropius conceived of in 1922 expresses this conception: the *Bau* (construction) appears as the "core" of the organic, concentric development of the community and its members. Moreover, the Bauhaus's position in the "center" of Germany, in the little town of Weimar, symbolized for its director the mission of a social reconciliation that politics itself could not accomplish. As Gropius explained,

> German art has a mission today, the role of the mediator falls to it: equilibrate or link the oppositions. Weimar seems to be once



> more the theater of decisions. It is not by chance that Weimar is located in the heart of Germany and that the latter is in the middle of Europe. All the opportunity and the tragedy of German art are based on that.[48]

In this respect, the insistence of both Gropius and Itten on *counterpoint* as the main principle of plastic composition is eloquent, counterpoint being, after all, a tamed dissonance, a mastered contradiction and, as such, containing the metaphoric potential of a possible harmony: the conflicts raging outside can and must form an orchestrated, equilibrated play within the work of art.

V. Magical Efficiency

But how could the Bauhaus's decision to master dissonant reality, specifically by making an abstraction of it, function? The ritualistic aspect of Bauhaus objects in general, and of the African Chair in particular, operate in this aporetic space. Gropius wagered that subjective faith did not only help to refute objective reality but was also capable of engendering a new one in its image: "We have *to believe* in this work," he argued.

> It is by protecting ourselves from seeking influence on the exterior, by looking for a powerful inner spiritual cohesion, that our work will radiate little by little to the exterior by its own means. It is only by the separation from the exterior that we can paralyze the splintering effect of the big city.[49]

The method advocated by Gropius is grounded in self-suggestion, similar in its function to "magic idealism" as explained by Novalis.[50] Both romanticism and expressionism had a pointed conception of the subject—which partially explains the important influence of the former upon the latter. In one of his numerous fragments describing the auto-affection of the subject, Novalis wrote, "Every faith is both the result and the creation of a miracle. God exists in the instant that I believe he does."[51] "Magical idealism," elsewhere also called by Novalis "magical realism," was a radical version of the idea that the "real" could be the product of the subjective will. This was valid for the Bauhaus as well. So much so that, transposed to the Bauhaus context, the Novalis fragment could be read as: "Every object is both the result and the creation of a miracle. Community exists in the instant that I believe it does."

The early Bauhaus was ultimately a matter of magic. Weber had perceived that the charisma of the disenchanted era was supposed to exercise its disruptive function through magical methods, running counter to the prevalent rational approach to reality. On the other

hand, as Marcel Mauss and Henri Hubert explained in their classic essay on magic, written in 1902–1903, both technology and magic were "efficient" and "capable of production."[52] Mauss and Hubert differentiated magic's productivity from that of technology by the latter's dependency on causality. Any technical result needs a cause, they postulated. Magic, in contrast, creates "ex nihilo, it does with words and gestures what techniques are doing with work. It avoids effort, because it replaces reality by images, it makes almost nothing, but it makes believe."[53] The Bauhaus had at its disposal some important conditions of this magical efficiency; its artist-magician(s) produced tangible artifacts, and the Bauhaus's collective identity objectified the suggestive action of the latter.

The African Chair, for instance, through its self-enclosed, solid, and hieratic form, obeys the Bauhaus's ontological project to produce a "whole" subject (endowed with wholeness and uniqueness) with a center, an "authentic" subject. By suggesting *already* the subject *yet* to come, the chair is meant to be—through its mere existence and its use—the instrument of its realization. By 1921 the influential critic Adolf Behne had articulated two discerning metaphors for handcraft (Behne's insight is probably due to the fact that he was criticizing, without admitting it, his own past).[54] He compared handcraft's circular mode of creation to the exclusive relation between the mother and the child or between the believer and his God.[55] The self-enclosed form of the hand-made African Chair is reflexive; it exposes the circular mode of its creation, the inextricable continuity between conception and execution. Behne's second insight is that, like the mother with her child, the creator of the handmade object has an authentic relation with his work: a genetically unique, nonreproducible relation. Similarly, each incision, each engraving of the African Chair is a trace of Breuer's creative experience. In every stroke of color on the chair's frame Breuer settles subjective time. Gunta Stölzl wove the fabric *directly* on the chair, following the thread of her inspiration and adapting it *exclusively* to this object. Furthermore, Behne's engendering metaphor includes the idea of the artist as "genius." The genius is neither the effect nor the product of the milieu, of existing reality, but its producer.[56] Gropius's writings contain the latent idea of a gendered conception of the "genius": as if the semen of the artist (his spirit) was expected to fertilize the passive machine. The architect adopted the classical division between masculine form and feminine matter. Following that division, he considered only the objects produced by the artist, then reproduced by the machine, to be full of meaning and alive. Otherwise, they fall into the "tote Ordnung" (dead order) of the world, the disenchanted world of "Zahl" (number). The "Zahl" implied rational calculation and virtually infinite technical repro-

ducibility: "Where there is weakness, the nostalgia for exactness and unity runs the risk of a 'dead order.' The spirit suffocates under the mechanical and its sign, the number, when it is not drenched constantly in the source of the unconscious."[57] Behne established an equivalence between the artist-craftsman and the believer that was based upon an idea of the absorption of the subject into the image he contemplates during the act of devotion: an image either virtual or perceptible, either religious or aesthetic.

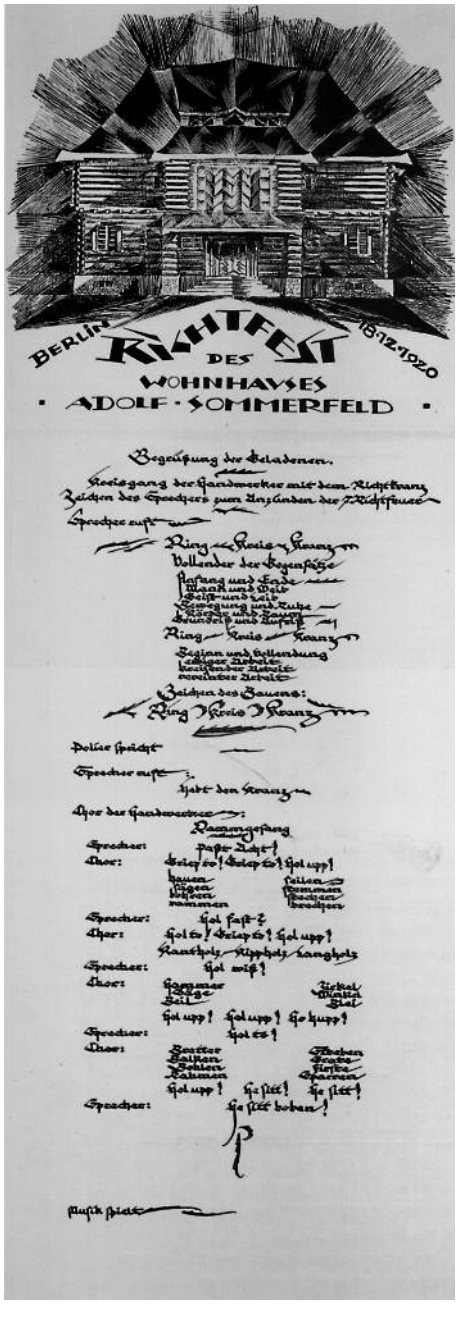
Behne's double metaphor directly relates to Benjamin's interpretation in which the core of the "cult value" of the work of art is its "authenticity," meaning its uniqueness, all that is transmissible by its origin and its material duration. For the work of art, technological reproducibility as a process "touches on a highly sensitive core, more vulnerable than that of any natural object."[58] Reproducibility is the deathblow to the artwork's authenticity, as technological warfare had been the deathblow to modern experience. The return to the unique handmade object, as exemplified in the African Chair, was intended to stop the irreversible depreciation of authentic creation, in the same way that the devotional contemplation of the work of art was a means of authentic experience. Thus, when Itten grasped the charcoal and concentrated all his forces on his drawing, he was acting at the same time as a mother and as a believer.

VI. Bauhaus Rites

Especially during the first three years of the Bauhaus, Gropius and Itten insisted on the formative function of play and rites.[59] Beyond theater as such, ritualism was cultivated in many instances, the most striking of which was the *Richtfest*, a celebration of the inauguration of the Sommerfeld Haus's construction on December 18, 1920.[60] Gropius and Adolf Meyer conceived of this ceremony that included a procession whose content and rhythm were highly scripted. This procession joins the genealogy of *Das Zeichen* (The Sign), the hieratic ceremony conceived by Peter Behrens at the Mathildenhöhe in Darmstadt for the inauguration of the Colony of the Artists.[61] The *Richtfest* had a coryphaeus who led a chorus of men and women wearing special costumes that divided them into two distinct groups. Over time it became more and more evident that the expressionist *Gesamtkunstwerk*—meant to be the instrument of future collective communion—would remain a pure utopia. The Bauhaus thus began to organize its private rites in the same way that Bruno Taut and his friends created their virtual private cenacle, the Glass Chain. (Without a common organizational center, thirteen architects and artists living in disparate cities in Germany made up the Glass Chain, a utopian group whose members exchanged letters and utopian architectural

Martin Jahn. Score for the *Richtfest*, celebrating the inauguration of the construction of the Sommerfeld Haus, December 18, 1920.

drawings for a year beginning in December 1919.) As a collective work of art, the *Gesamtkunstwerk* was supposed to be produced by a creative, seminal *Volk*. What was available for the moment was its reversed image: the masses. Because of the absence of the *Volk*, the artists of the Bauhaus and the Glass Chain turned inward. Lacking an objective cult, they invented one. Performing their own lives and their own community, they hoped to realize both. As Gropius wrote, "Perhaps the living artist has more of a vocation to *live* a work of art than to create it."[62] This is the context in which he also established inventories of "symbols." In his text "The Aim of the Lodges" (Das Ziel der Bauloge), he condemned the use of established symbols such as crosses and skulls and envisaged new symbols capable of expressing "the joy of life."[63] In another manuscript, one that questioned the means appropriate for accelerating the advent of the unity of the arts, Gropius established an exhaustive list of symbols, including swastikas and the Star of David. To those historically charged symbols he added circles, squares, and triangles whose arbitrary character made them mute for those who did not share Gropius's Byzantine codes.[64]



Weber, in his 1917 lecture, also grasped the aporia inherent in this kind of voluntarist, subjective quest for a collective "sense." He pointed out the "monstrous" results of such a quest. Subjective aspiration to genuine community was giving rise to sects, while nostalgia for monumental art was ultimately leading to historicist monuments:

> The fate of our times is characterized by rationalization and intellectualization and, above all, by the "disenchantment of the world." Precisely the ultimate and most sublime values have retreated from public life either into the transcendental realm of mystic life or into the brotherliness of direct and personal human relations. . . . If we attempt to force and to "invent" a monumental style in art, such miserable monstrosities are produced as the many monuments of the last twenty years. If one tries intellectually to construe new religions without a new and genuine prophecy, then, in an inner sense, something similar will result, but with still worse effects. And academic prophecy, finally, will create only fanatical sects but never a genuine community.[65]

Weber was thinking at this point of the megalomaniac practices of the Stefan George Kreis (or, Georgekreis), a group of young male intellectuals who venerated, in a religious manner, the symbolist poet Stefan George.[66] The function of this circle was strictly codified; its activities consisted not only of collective readings and the writing and editing of poetry and theoretical essays on Hölderlin and Nietzsche, but also of costumed rites in which the "Master," as George was called by his adepts, was always at the center. These rites had a strong pagan character. Despite their important differences, both the Georgekreis and the expressionist Bauhaus were collective communities of artists eager for religiosity—the subjective quest for religion in a world over which dogmatic religions no longer held sway. Each religion has its prophets and its chiefs and, even more, its substitutes for the disenchanted era. The "fraternal" community of the Bauhaus, distinct in its function from the authoritarian Georgekreis, was no exception. More so than Gropius, Itten assumed with an extraordinary self-awareness the role of the charismatic chief in the Bauhaus.

VII. The Charismatic Subject

Much that was criticized by Weber can ultimately be found in Itten's pedagogy. His pedagogical methods, which advocated tactility and empathy, suggested as their vocation filling the "gap" inherent in representation and abolishing the differential and external character of knowledge. The projective posture of Itten's body in front of works of art similarly expressed his cognitive attitude: no gap was tolerated between the subject and the object, between the object and its sign. Itten propagated values and recipes for life, as evidenced by the gymnastics and breathing exercises with which he started his courses every morning. Above all, his main pedagogical means was his own persona. Insofar as he was an incarnation of the *Weltanschauung* that he taught, Itten ceased to be a teacher and became a model and a savior. He thus created a sect. The tragic irony of the era of technological reproducibility was that fear about control of reproduction of works of art and objects was directly proportional to the wild reproduction of selves, each eager to imitate the charismatic chief.

Sometimes described as a saint, sometimes as a dictator, but always as a charismatic figure, Itten was a personality who cultivated his charisma in detail, from his clothing and the tone of his voice to his distant attitude. Paul Citroen would recall many years later:

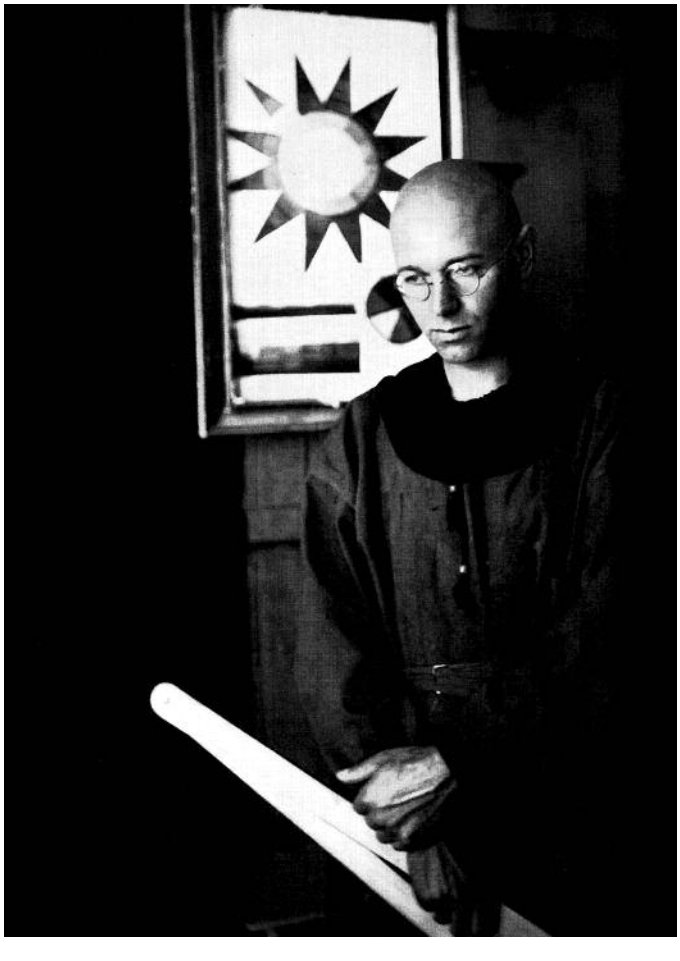
> There was something demonic about Itten. As a master he was either ardently admired or just as ardently hated by his opponents, of whom there were many. In any event, it was impossible to ignore him. For those of us who belonged to the Mazdaznan group—

Portrait of Johannes Itten, 1921. Photograph.

a unique community within the student body—Itten exuded a special radiance. One could almost call it holiness. We were inclined to approach him only in whispers; our reverence was overwhelming, and we were completely enchanted and happy when he associated with us pleasantly and without restraint.[67]

The photograph in which Itten stands in front of his *Farbenkugel* (*Color-sphere*, 1921), reminiscent of Philipp Otto Runge's homonym studies of 1810, is revealing: Itten appears self-absorbed, lost in his own interior world, as if attaining the center of himself. In this posture Itten becomes the ideal subject, astonishingly similar to the African Chair, equally hieratic and self-enclosed. The point is not simply the enormous impact of the master on the artworks of his students. The African Chair has absorbed, in its materiality and its form, the charismatic forces of the master, of *any* master. That is why this chair has a pronounced anthropomorphism and, specifically, a regal one.

This throne functions as the radiant center missing in the outside, common reality. As a product and an agent of Bauhaus rites, it also inherits their aporia. Photographed straight on, the African Chair expresses not only its authority but also its unreality. While expecting the charismatic chief, it exhibits merely its emptiness.



Notes

1. Max Weber, "Science as a Vocation," in *From Max Weber: Essays in Sociology*, trans. and ed. H.H. Gerth and C. Wright Mills (New York: Oxford University Press, 1946), 152. Isabelle Kalinowski, in *Leçons wébériennes sur la science et la propagande* (Marseille: Agone, 2005), has established that Weber's speech was given in 1917, not 1918 as previously thought. "Wissenschaft als Beruf" was published in 1922.

2. Weber, "Science as a Vocation," 139.

3. Weber, "Science as a Vocation," 137, 142.

4. The notion of "charisma" is omnipresent in Weber's writings. See, for instance, Max Weber, "The Nature of Charismatic Authority and Its Routinization," in *Theory of Social and Economic Organization*, trans. A.R. Henderson and Talcott Parsons (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 1947). For my interpretation of the expressionist Bauhaus through the notion of "charisma," I am especially indebted to Eric Michaud, whose interest in this notion has nourished many of our conversations. I also thank Isabelle Kalinowski, whose wonderful edition and translation of "Science as Vocation" has provided much intellectual stimulation.

5. The philosopher Max Scheler also observed this phenomenon and tried to explain it in a text posthumously published under the title *Vorbilder und Führer* (1933). See Max Scheler, "Exemplars of Person and Leaders," in *Person and Self-Value: Three Essays*, trans. Manfred S. Frings (Boston: M. Nijhoff, 1987).

6. "Neues Bauen," *Der Holzbau*, supplement to the *Deutsche Bauzeitung* 2 (1920): 5, quoted in Walter Gropius, *Ausgewählte Schriften*, vol. 3, ed. Hartmut Probst and Christian Schädlich (Berlin: Ernst und Sohn Verlag, 1988), 78–79. Unless otherwise noted, all translations are by the author.

7. In the "Program of the Staatliche Bauhaus in Weimar," Gropius wrote: "The Bauhaus strives to bring together all creative effort into one whole, to unify all the disciplines of practical art—sculpture, painting, handicrafts, and the crafts—as inseparable components of a new architecture." He added, "Avoidance of all rigidity; priority of creativity; freedom of individuality, but strict study discipline." As quoted in Hans Maria Wingler, *The Bauhaus: Weimar, Dessau, Berlin, Chicago*, ed. Joseph Stein, trans. Wolfgang Jabs and Basil Gilbert (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1976), 32.

8. Marcel Gauchet, *Le désenchantement du monde: Une histoire politique de la religion* (Paris: Gallimard, 1985).

9. Claude Lefort, *L'invention démocratique: Les limites de la domination totalitaire* (Paris: Fayard, 1981); and Claude Lefort, *Le temps présent* (Paris: Belin, 2007).

10. "Sitzung der Form- und Werkmeister am 3. Oktober 1922, no. 54," in *Meisterratsprotokolle des Staatlichen Bauhauses Weimar 1919–1925*, ed. Volker Wahl and Ute Ackermann (Weimar: Verl. Hermann Böhlaus, 2001), 239–240.

11. Christopher Wilk also reminds us that the chair disappeared shortly after its making, in 1921, to reappear all of a sudden, in 2004. Apparently, the chair was sold to a family living near Weimar. The family's descendants sold it in 2004 to the Bauhaus-Archiv in Berlin. See Christopher Wilk, "Marcel Breuer and Gunta Stölzl: 'African' Chair. 1921," in *Workshops for Modernity*, ed. Barry Bergdoll and Leah Dickerman (New York: MoMA, 2009), 100–103. The first to give a precise account of the chair was Christian Wolsdorff, "Der Afrikanische Stuhl," *Museums Journal* (Berlin), no. 3 (2004): 40.

12. At first sight, the photomontage appears to obey an evolutionary temporality, evidenced by the optimism inherent in the dematerialization of technology and the objectivity of science. These two principles are embodied in the tubular-steel chair.

Nonetheless, a circular movement in the same photomontage contradicts the linear temporality of the "film": the magic of the African Chair (the present essay attempts to explain the significance of this "magic") finds an actualization in the last image of the photomontage, in which the body of a woman is mysteriously suspended in midair. This tension is characteristic of the Bauhaus as a whole but beyond the scope of the present essay.

13. The other chairs obey a different model of subjectivity and a different conception of the relationship between art, labor, and technology. Little by little, the socialistic, interdependent, Tayloristic model predominated in the Bauhaus. The self-sufficiency of handicraft was criticized in favor of the interdependency of the division of labor. The objects photographed diagonally express exactly this interdependency: they are thus "relational," "correlative objects," "knots" between different actions of the fabric of life. The mysticism of "relationships" has greatly contributed to the transition from the *Gesamtkunstwerk* to *Gestaltung*.

14. Meyer Schapiro has analyzed "frontality" as a sign of the authority and the "irreality" of the divine in his text "Words and Pictures: On the Literal and the Symbolic in the Illustration of a Text," in *Words, Script, and Pictures: Semiotics of Visual Language* (New York: George Braziller, 1996).

15. See Christopher Wilk, *Marcel Breuer: Furniture and Interiors* (New York: MoMA, 1981), 15; and Magdalena Droste and Manfred Ludwig, *Marcel Breuer: Design* (Cologne: Taschen, 1994), 9–10.

16. See Wilk, "Marcel Breuer and Gunta Stölzl: African Chair. 1921."

17. See Jill Lloyd, *German Expressionism: Primitivism and Modernity* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1991).

18. Within the Bauhaus, *community* was considered the perfect antonym of *society*; it included the critique of the political and cultural process of equalization, autonomization, and individualization in modern societies. The first conceptual configuration of a political organism appeared around 1760, in the context of the German criticism of French classicism and the Enlightenment. At the end of the nineteenth century, while intense urbanization and the progressive nationalization of the masses were in progress, this polarity became extremely important; it was crystallized by sociologist Ferdinand Tönnies in *Gemeinschaft und Gesellschaft* (1887).

19. Weber, "Science as a Vocation," 140–141.

20. On empathy theory in German aesthetic thought, see Harry Francis Mallgrave and Eleftherios Ikonomou, eds., *Empathy, Form, and Space: Problems in German Aesthetics 1873–1893* (Santa Monica, CA: The Getty Center for the History of Art and Humanities, 1994). A more extensive anthology in Italian is also available: Andrea Pinotti, ed., *Estetica ed empatia* (Milan: Guerini Studio, 1997).

21. Johannes Itten, "Analyses of Old Masters" (1921), in Wingler, *The Bauhaus*, 49.

22. Paul Klee to Lily Klee, 16 January 1921, in *Briefe an die Familie: 1893–1940*, ed. Felix Klee (Cologne: DuMont, 1979); quoted in Johannes Itten, *Design and Form: The Basic Course at the Bauhaus* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1987), 12.

23. Walter Benjamin, "The Work of Art in the Age of Its Technological Reproducibility," in *1935–1938*, vol. 3 of *Selected Writings*, ed. Howard Eiland and Michael W. Jennings (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press, 2002), 101–136.

24. Leah Dickerman recently referred to the decline of experience as a key notion for the understanding of the Bauhaus. Leah Dickerman, "Bauhaus Fundaments," in *Workshops for Modernity*, ed. Bergdoll and Dickerman, 17.

25. Itten, *Design and Form*, 34.

26. Benjamin, "Experience and Poverty," in *1927–1934*, vol. 2 of *Selected Writings*, ed. Michael W. Jennings, Howard Eiland, and Gary Smith (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press, 1998), 731–736. Benjamin will eventually refer to the later Bauhaus (the one of glass and steel) in a positive way, finding in it what he calls "positive barbarity," the decision to assume the poverty of experience. However, I believe Benjamin's reading is not pertinent to the early Bauhaus.

27. Benjamin, "Experience and Poverty," 731–732.

28. On the "silence" of experience and its links to heroism in Benjamin's thought, see Antonia Birnbaum, *Bonheur justice. Walter Benjamin: Le détour grec* (Paris: Payot, 2009). In her interpretation of the "poverty of experience," Birnbaum makes an unexpected detour through Greek tragedy and not, as is usually the case, through German baroque drama.

29. The theme of the bourgeois interior found in the *Arcades Project* (*Passagen-Werk)* could be read as an analysis of the defensive strategies of the subject. See Susan Buck-Morss, *The Dialectics of Seeing: Walter Benjamin and the* Arcades Project (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1991).

30. Benjamin, "Experience and Poverty," 732.

31. Weber, "Science as a Vocation," 154.

32. For a catalog of the multiple "reform" movements in Germany, see Kai Buchholz, Rita Latocha, Hilke Peckmann, and Klaus Wolbert, eds., *Die Lebensreform: Entwürfe zur Neugestaltung von Leben und Kunst um 1900* (Darmstadt, Germany: Institut Mathildenhöhe, Verlag Häusser, 2001).

33. Benjamin, "Experience and Poverty," 732.

34. For the politically fatal character of the dissociation between the spiritual and the material, see Walter Benjamin, "Theories of German Fascism: On the Collection of Essays *War and Warrior*, edited by Ernst Jünger" (1930), in *New German Critique* no. 17 (Spring 1979): 120–128.

35. Gropius, "Neues Bauen," 78; emphasis in original.

36. Gropius, "Neues Bauen," 78.

37. Gropius, "Neues Bauen," 78; emphasis in original.

38. Walter Gropius to Karl Ernst Osthaus, 2 February 1919, in *Arbeitsrat für Kunst, 1918–1921* (Berlin: Akademie der Künste, 1980), 117. (The original letter is in AfK-01-17, Archives of Arbeitsrat für Kunst, Akademie der Künste.) In a speech to his students, Gropius said, "No large spiritual organizations, but small, secret, self-contained societies, lodges. Conspiracies will form which will want to watch over and artistically shape a secret, a nucleus of belief, until from the individual groups a universally great, enduring, spiritual-religious idea will rise again, which finally must find its crystalline expression in a Great Gesamtkunstwerk." Walter Gropius, "Address to the Students of the Staatliche Bauhaus" (July 1919), in Wingler, *The Bauhaus*, 36.

39. For the notion of *Bildung*, see Reinhart Koselleck, "On the Anthropological and Semantic Structure of *Bildung,*" in *The Practice of Conceptual History* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2002), 170–207. See also Marino Pulliero, *Walter Benjamin: Le désir d'authenticité* (Paris: Fayard, 2005). For Germany's spiritual revolution, conceived in opposition to France's political revolution of 1789, see *Die Revolution des Geistes: Politisches Denken in Deutschland 1770–1830*, ed. Jürgen Gebhardt (Munich: List Verlag, 1968).

40. Zeev Sternhell, *Les Anti-Lumières: Du XVIII siècle à la guerre froide* (Paris: Fayard, 2006).

41. On the sublime conversion of material distress into a spiritual force, see the

writings of Philippe Lacoue-Labarthe, especially his "Histoire et Mimésis," in *L'imitation des modernes: Typographies II* (Paris: Galilée, 1986), 87–111.

42. Many important books have contributed to the study of the *völkisch* elements in fascist ideology. See especially, Fritz Stern, *The Politics of Cultural Despair: A Study in the Rise of the Germanic Ideology* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1963); and George Mosse, *The Crisis of German Ideology: Intellectual Origins of the Third Reich* (New York: Grosset and Dunlop, 1964). With regard to German architectural thought, from the *Werkbund* to the Bauhaus, see Francesco Dal Co, "On the Cultural Tradition of the Werkbund," in *Figures of Architecture and Thought: German Architectural Culture, 1880–1920* (New York: Rizzoli, 1990), 171–261.

43. Thomas Mann, *Reflections of a Nonpolitical Man*, trans. Walter Morris (New York: Frederick Ungar, 1983).

44. On the antipolitical dimension of expressionist ideology, see Maria Stavrinaki, *La chaîne de verre: Une correspondance expressionniste* (Paris: Editions de la Villette, 2009), 19–62.

45. Walter Gropius to Ewald Düllberg, n.d., in Walter Gropius Archive, Bauhaus-Archiv, Berlin.

46. Bruno Taut, "Der Sozialismus des Künstlers," *Sozialistische Monatshefte* 25 (1919): 260. For a more complete analysis of the antagonism cultivated by Expressionist artists toward party-politics, an antagonism which was distinct from Dadaist political discourse, see my article "Prendere partito. I dadaisti berlinesi come arbitri politici," *Memoria e Ricerca*, no. 33, May 2010 (special issue on the theme "Artists and Parties"): 29–47.

47. On the ideologies of the sacred union, see Jean Laude, ed., *Le retour à l'ordre* (St. Etienne: Université de St. Etienne/CIEREC, 1974); and Kenneth Silver, *Esprit de Corps: The Art of the Parisian Avant-Garde and the First World War, 1914–1925* (Princeton: Princeton University Press; London: Thames and Hudson, 1989). On the Bauhaus as an expression of the sacred union, see Maria Stavrinaki, "Total Artwork versus Revolution: Art, Politics and Temporalities in the Expressionist Architectural Utopias and the Merzbau," in *The Aesthetics of the Total Artwork: On Borders and Fragments*, ed. Danielle Follett and Anke Finger (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, forthcoming).

48. Walter Gropius, "Das staatliche Bauhaus" (ca. 1922), unpub. ms., in Walter Gropius Archive, Bauhaus-Archiv, Berlin.

49. Walter Gropius, "Das Ziel der Bauloge" (ca. 1919), n.p., in Walter Gropius Archive, Bauhaus-Archiv, Berlin. Emphasis in original.

50. See Jean-Claude Lebensztejn, "Note sur Diderot et la magie de l'art," *Critique* no. 673/674 (2003): 498–513.

51. Novalis, *Allgemeine Brouillon* (1779), ed. Hans-Joachim Mähl (Hamburg: F. Meiner Verlag, 1993), 659.

52. Henri Hubert and Marcel Mauss, "Esquisse d'une théorie générale de la magie," in *Sociologie et anthropologie* (Paris: PUF, 1950), 11.

53. Hubert and Mauss, "Esquisse d'une théorie générale de la magie," 11.

54. Gropius bought multiple copies of Behne's earlier expressionist book *Wiederkehr der Kunst* (Return of Art, 1918) for his students in 1919. On the conditions that allowed the transition from expressionism to rationalism, see Alan Colquhoun, "Kritik und Selbstkritik," in *Expressionismus und Neue Sachlichkeit: Moderne Architektur in Deutschland, 1900 bis 1950*, ed. Vittorio Magnano Lampugnani and

Romana Schneider (Stuttgart: Verlag Gerd Hatje), 251–271; and Maria Stavrinaki, "Dieu, l'art et le travail dans l'Allemagne des années vingt (De l'Alpine Architektur aux Tiller Girls)," *Les Cahiers du MNAM* 83 (Winter 2003): 60–81.

55. Adolf Behne, "Mittelalterisches und modernes Bauen," *Soziale Wirtschaft*, July 1921, 175–178; and Adolf Behne, "Kunst, Handwerk, Technik," *Die neue Rundschau* 33 (1922): 1021–1037. The latter work is available as "Art, Craft, Technology," trans. Ch. Crasemann Collins, in Dal Co, *Figures of Architecture and Thought*, 324–338.

56. On the notion of genius, see the classic study by Edgar Zilsel, *Le génie: Histoire d'une notion de l'antiquité à la renaissance*, trans. Michel Thévoz (Paris: Éditions de Minuit, 1993).

57. Walter Gropius, "Die neue Bau-Gesinnung" (1925), in *Ausgewählte Schriften*, vol. 3, ed. Probst and Schädlich, 96.

58. Benjamin, "The Work of Art in the Age of Its Technological Reproducibility," in *1938–1940*, vol. 4 of *Walter Benjamin: Selected Writings*, ed. Howard Eiland and Michael W. Jennings (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press, 2003), 254.

59. On the Bauhaus as theater, see Eric Michaud, *Théâtre au Bauhaus* (Lausanne: Âge d'Homme, 1978).

60. See Annemarie Jaeggi, "Ein geheimnisvolles Mysterium: Bauhütten-Romantik und Freimaurerei am frühen Bauhaus," in *Johannes Itten, Wassily Kandinsky, Paul Klee: Das Bauhaus und die Esoterik*, ed. Christoph Wagner (Hamm, Germany: Gustav-Lübke-Museum, 2005–2006), 37–45. Wolfgang Pehnt's classic article on the romantic phase of Gropius also refers to this ceremony. Wolfgang Pehnt, "Gropius the Romantic," *The Art Bulletin* 53, no. 3 (September 1971): 379–392.

61. Peter Behrens, *Feste des Lebens und der Kunst: Eine Betrachtung des Theaters als Höchsten Kultursymbols* (Jena: Eugen Diederichs Verlag, 1900). A significant part of the text is included in the anthology *Theater im 20. Jahrhundert: Programm—Schriften, Stilperioden, Reformmodelle*, ed. Manfred Braunek (Reinbeck, Germany: Rowohlts Enzyklopädie, 1986), 46–50. On the political meaning of Behrens's involvement in Darmstadt, see Stanford O. Anderson, "Peter Behrens and the New Architecture of Germany, 1900–1907" (Ph.D. diss., Columbia University, 1968). On *Das Zeichen*, see Stanford O. Anderson, "Peter Behrens's Highest *Kultursymbol*, The Theater," *Perspecta* 26 (1990): 103–134.

62. Gropius, "Das Ziel der Bauloge." Emphasis in original.

63. Gropius, "Das Ziel der Bauloge."

64. See Gropius, "Das Ziel der Bauloge"; and Walter Gropius, "Mit welchen Mitteln kann das Ziel einer Vereinheitlichung der Künste gefördert werden?" (ca. 1919), n.p., in Walter Gropius Archive, Bauhaus-Archiv, Berlin. For the list of symbols, see Jaeggi, "Ein geheimnisvolles Mysterium," 40.

65. Weber, "Science as a Vocation," 155.

66. On the Stefan George Kreis, see Stefan Breuer, *Ästhetischer Fundamentalismus: Stefan George und der deutsche Antimodernismus* (Darmstadt, Germany: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1995).

67. Paul Citroen, "Mazdaznan at the Bauhaus," in *Bauhaus and Bauhaus People: Personal Opinions and Recollections of Former Bauhaus Members and Their Contemporaries*, ed. Eckhard Neumann (New York: Van Nostrand Reinhold, 1993), 46.