The Janus Coin of Artistic Vision: Construction, Craftsmanship and Class in the Bauhaus and the Nazi Aesthetics

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*W*orld War I was the first horrifying application of the incredible force of Industrial Revolution to the business of warfare. The conflict's end cast a sobering peace upon both the defeated and the victors; the former were traumatized by destruction and deprivation, while the latter were shocked by the impetus to adjust to international exchange in which Germany and former components of the Austro-Hungarian Empire were to play no constructive part.(1) Vast economic and political powers were displaced in months, and around the world; great thinkers were forced to consider the chilling philosophical implications of the "War to End All Wars."

It is no surprise that artists were at the forefront of this vast intellectual reassessment. In the 1920s and 1930s, Germany was forced to examine its place in the world; its independence, and in some ways its very existence, were threatened by the peace treaties that had brought occupying French troops into its domain, and put productive land under foreign administration.(2) The Weimar government as formed by the victorious parties of the war, was in many ways incompetent and occasionally corrupt, but many of its problems came from sheer desperation: outside, the great powers were arranged against it, and within, upheaval was the norm.(3)

Within this context emerged a surprisingly lively and potent current of artistic modernism, and among the great innovators of the day was the German architect Walter Gropius. In his search for meaning following the war, Gropius made two determinations. First, artists had become frivolous and disassociated from the common person as their works grew distant from what he considered the ultimate goal of art: the production of a completed structure.(4) And secondly, in the face of new conditions created by industrialization, progress within the arts could only be made by creating a type of artist with "thorough practical grounding under factory conditions combined with sound theoretical instruction in the laws of design."(5) Such an artist would not be "remote from the world," but instead capable of fusing the virtues of handicraft and manufacture.(6)

Within Gropius' comprehensive view of the arts, he considered the medieval cathedral the ultimate expression of the creative impulse; an expression in which the painter, the sculptor, the mason, the glassblower among other craftsworkers were in full accord, practicing their crafts for a definite purpose and in a definite relationship to their environment.(7) Gropius codified these ideas in the "Bauhaus Manifesto," which he released in 1919, a year after the conclusion of World War I.(8) Gropius' ideas attracted many luminaries whose talents ranged across the arts, including many visionary painters, whose status as craftsworkers remained tenuous due to Gropius's disdain for purely decorative "salon arts."(9) His body of ideas was encapsulated in the artistic academy known as the Bauhaus, of which he became leader that same year.(10)

 The Bauhaus was under constant scrutiny by the Nazi Party.(11) As early as 1930, Bauhaus artists were persecuted by provincial Nazi officials in Thuringia.(12) The Nazi cultural bureaucracy was quick to employ vicious intimidation and propaganda to enforce Hitler's aesthetic beliefs.(13) Hitler's views on art were in opposition not only to modernist, but all non-objective art. He had also been an artist in his youth, and failed - on two separate occasions - to be accepted into a prestigious art school in Vienna.(14) As he rose to power, Hitler combined his racist beliefs with his aesthetic theories in an effort to politicize all cultural production. Hitler's aesthetic ideas were, at first, slow to take root due to their vagueness, and gave little hint as to how modernism was to be identified.(15) Hitler's thoughts were then articulated more clearly in 1933, and yet again more forcefully in a series of speeches in late 1934.(16) (17) The resulting climate within Germany was hostile towards the Bauhaus, and amounted to a state of internal exile for the Bauhaus artists. Under Walter Gropius, the school was harried out of Weimar.(18) Later, it was shut down in Dessau.(19) Its final dissolution in Germany occurred in Berlin.(20)

Much writing has been devoted to the heroic efforts of the Bauhauslers as they sought to thrive in an increasingly regimented, hierarchical, short-sighted and violent society. However, deeper questions must be asked: to what extent were the Bauhaus and the Nazi Party diametrically opposed, and to what extent did they share commonalities born of their shared heritage as post-war institutions? In what ways did the organizations use art for ideological ends, and what traces of modernist ideology exist within the intellectual landscape of both? When these questions are addressed, a vista of deep aesthetic and ideological conflict opens to view. In this context, the opposing forces of Nazi and Bauhaus can be seen as two sides of a coin, one destructive and one constructive, but intrinsically related.

Though there was scattered early opposition within the Nazi ranks to some of Hitler's artistic ideals, acceptance of his dogma on art-related matters quickly became widespread.(21) The principal goal of the Nazi agenda was to "purify" the Reich.(22) In aesthetic terms, this meant insulating it from "internationalism."(23) Modernism was denounced as a "Bolshevik" influence no better than communism.(24) The modernist style was purported to have an essentially Jewish character, the Jews being loathed for their "stateless" nature.(25) The eradication of these influences were prefaced on the idea that "everything great is national."(26) Through a persistent scheme of racial nationalism in all things, a revival would be catalyzed, embodying the sacred spirit of Germany's racially pure ancestors, who were said to have founded all high cultures.(27)

Because Hitler lacked a formal aesthetic education, his definition of modernism was somewhat murky: one commentator characterized it as "any significant departure from conventionally perceived reality other than idealizing it."(28) In his youth, Hitler produced a body of artistic works that caused one professor to ask what school of architecture he had attended.(29) His overall lack of talent in rendering figures was a deciding factor in his rejection from art school. (30) Many of his surviving watercolors indicate his creative shortcomings through a lack of naturalism, dull coloration and faceless, almost puppet-like human figures.(31) Despite this, he advocated a hyper-realistic neoclassical style meant to epitomize the ideal of Aryan physical beauty.(32) Nothing odd, uncertain or grotesque was to be depicted; only recognizable messages of Aryan power were acceptable.(33)

Both the Bauhauslers and the Nazi Party were reacting in part to the writings of French philosopher Jean Gimpel, who stated near the turn of the century that artists had taken an elevated cultural position distant from ordinary society.(34) It was of the utmost importance for the Nazis to control all cultural forms. They essentially sought to supplant the entire German cultural heritage with a newly invented one by the use of myth. Superficially, the Bauhaus seems to be a completely different type of association: however, like the Nazis, the Bauhaus instituted a new relationship between art, artist and society as their central aim.

An early piece of Nazi propaganda illustrates, in part, the then-nascent Nazi view of the artist. In a comic strip appearing in a German newspaper in 1933, an artist with stereotypical Jewish features is shown sculpting a piece where many individual figures are shown in chaos, each one struggling against the others.(35) The character of Hitler emerges onto the scene, forcefully smashes this sculpture, and reshapes it into a single, imposing colossus using the same material. In the final panel, Hitler surveys his handiwork, and the caricature Jewish artist has disappeared without comment.(36) A legend below proclaims Hitler "Germany's sculptor." (Fig 1) (37)

Fig 1 / O. Garvens, "The Sculptor of Germany," *Kladderadatsch*, 1933, vol. 46, no. 49, p. 7, reproduced from Michaud, *The Cult of Art in Nazi Germany*, unnumbered insert, illustration 2

Though it comes from the early movement, this cartoon is emblematic of what some have referred to as the "cult of art" in Nazi Germany.(38) A skewed aesthetic sensibility seemed to permeate every aspect of Hitler's psyche and, by extension, every element of the Nazi regime. Within this highly stunted social system, every element of stagecraft, ritual, architecture, music, sculpture and visual art was pressed into state service in some manner. The Nazi cultural goal was to bring about the advent of a new state of sociopolitical affairs that, while occurring under the auspice of the German search for a collective identity, was instead the product of a single man's theatrical vision: a vision in which the entire resources of a people became a medium to be brutally manipulated according to Hitler's will.

As such, nothing in the artistic realm that was deemed insufficient, superfluous, or misapplied in its relationship to this grand national aesthetic-spiritual ritual was long permitted to exist in Nazi Germany. To cite but one example, a total ban on modernist art was inaugurated by way of the public "Degenerate Art Show."(39) Practicality and application were envisaged with great primacy over invention and theory; Joseph Goebbels, the Minister of Propaganda who during early years of the Nazi takeover largely controled the Reich's visual arts policies, perhaps said it best when he stated: "What matters is not one's intention but rather one's ability."(40) (41)

The concerted Nazi effort to purge non-objective modernist art from Germany can be said to have begun in earnest in August 1935, when Hitler got what may have been his first close look at modernist art, while viewing the "Images of Decadence in Art" exhibition in Dresden.(42) Hitler lamented, "the great masters of the past have been decried," and he would soon see to it that ideologically sound Neoclassicism with unmistakable political overtones would rise to the fore. (43) Such products typified the output of Nazi artists who bowdlerized earlier works, tacking on "Aryan" figures and Party symbolism in works such as *The Good Shepherd* mosaic of Ravenna.(44) Uninspired examinations of the human form were common in both sculpture and painting.(45)

Visual art, sculpture and architecture were quickly re-imagined within the Nazi context, but the quality of artistic products was so dismal that Nazi cultural bureaucrats eventually set forth rules asserting that journalists were permitted only to "describe" art, not to "employ judgmental or critical rhetoric."(46) In their response to the changing conditions of production and labor, the Nazis

mandated, and then created the means to fulfill what became a massive production of artworks in which method and message began to merge. This effort impacted artistic production in different ways, but it was universally detrimental to individual artistic expression.

By the mid-1930s, Nazi painting was characterized by extremely linear layout, precise outlines, and even, poster-like application of paint that lent the works to reproduction.(47) This effectively limited each artist to the requirements of the Propaganda Ministry to which they were bound by Goebbels's control, from 1933, of the cultural bureaucracy that oversaw all practicing artists.(48) What naturally rose to the top were works that exemplified Goebbel and Hitler's Nazi aesthetic criteria. For example, sculpture that drew heavily on Hitler's demonstrated fondness for styles from Greco-Roman antiquity(49), tended in the direction of the grotesque hyper-realism that can be detected in the works of Arno Breker, who became the Nazis's most celebrated sculptor.(50) Breker's works demonstrates monomaniacal focus on super-strength and virility that shows none of the Greco-Roman concern for the human form as a thing of beauty in and of itself. As such, a sculpture of a male nude becomes a symbolic depiction of barely restrained, and brutal force. (Fig. 2)
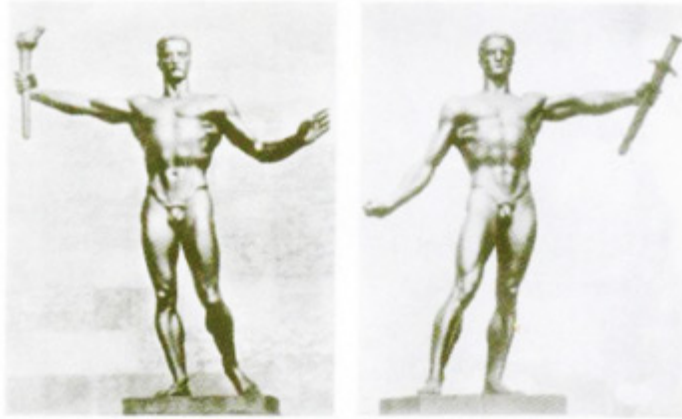

Fig. 2 / Breker, Arno, *The Party* and *The Army,* 1938, Berlin, reproduced from Michaud, *The Cult of Art in Nazi Germany*, unnumbered insert, illustration 4ab

The Bauhaus and its adherents are often viewed as champions of a then-progressive mindset, but close examination shows that the range of influences on a given body of ideas is not always so easy to categorize. From the start, Walter Gropius was devoted to the revival of the "architectonic spirit" in art, and wished to reconcile all other forms of art within the human context of the completed building.(51) Bauhaus teachers were referred to as "masters of form" in order to emphasize their focus upon the applied arts and the practicality of the artifacts they brought into being by their hands and tools.(52) As with their Nazi enemies, a great deal of their effort was focused on practical execution.

Walter Gropius's other stated goal - that being the erasure of class distinctions between craftsmen and artists - is telling in what it achieved, how it failed, and in how it was symbolized.(53) As an illustration of the first Bauhaus Manifesto, the medieval cathedral represented the apotheosis of Gropius's ultimate desire of unity, a symbol that is at once transcendental and inescapably solid.(54) Gropius' idea of the cathedral as the ultimate synthesis of all art forms working in harmony became the conceptual center of the Bauhaus, and around which, all production was oriented. This romantic view rooted the Bauhauslers fundamentally in a vision of the past that had to find its expression in an increasingly alien present. Thus, they faced and overcame - through constructive means - a crisis of identity strikingly similar to that which helped to drive the Nazis toward destruction.

Gropius's "classless" vision fell short in two ways that were then perhaps less obvious as they are now. Calling the creation of a profoundly spiritual and otherworldly space the ultimate expression of art and craft elevates the artist to the quasi-divine state that Gropius decried; furthermore, and with much more immediate and painful repercussions, those whose interests tended toward painting were the focus of a surprising level of bias-painters within the Bauhaus taking the blame for a tradition of symbolic self-aggrandizement dating back to Jan Van Eyck.(55)

Within the Bauhaus, painters were relatively few and their role in the overarching cathedral metaphor often held by glass painters.(56) The more conventional painters who did join with the Bauhaus often harbored spiritual beliefs about the origin of art and the aesthetic sense that went well beyond the practical, exploring philosophic realms not entirely welcome in the House of Construction. Paul Klee and Oscar Schlemmer, two Bauhauslers whose interest and training was chiefly in painterly arts, can provide some illumination regarding the struggle for artistic pluralism within the constraints of Gropius' Bauhaus.

Paul Klee, a German painter of Swiss nationality, held convictions about the connection of art and divinity that may draw comparison to Romanticism.(57) In his work, he "attempted to capture natural forms in terms of primal images"(58) and was said to have discovered "analogies to the universal design in the tiniest leaf."(59) Visiting Italy early in life, Klee is said to have been little impressed by the legacy of Renaissance masters venerated by his contemporaries; instead, he was fascinated by "the structural principles of Italian architecture, which he saw as a continuation of nature by human hands."(60)

Oskar Schlemmer was another Bauhaus visual artist.(61) His beliefs about aesthetics were perhaps even more paradoxical than Klee's: Schlemmer felt paintings were "revelations of the divine through the medium of man, known as 'the artist,' a language of forms and colors mystical in origin."(62) Schlemmer identified closely with Renaissance masters and derived some of his techniques and style directly from his interpretation of their own.(63) Thus, he represented two ideas quite suspect to Bauhauslers strongly aligned with Gropius's original vision: the sense of the artist as a mediator between God and man, and focus on art with no inherently architectural mission. A characteristic example of his work, *Four Figures and a Cube,* can be seen to blend geometric and color exploration in a way that not only clashes quite strongly with the Nazi artistic milieu, but also proclaims the artist's interest in painting as a form of art independent from construction. (Fig. 3)

Fig. 3 / 1928, Staatsgalerie, Stuttgart

The Bauhaus painters clearly felt their colleagues' strong biases against them. Schlemmer observed early in his time there that "the painters are no more than a necessary evil."(64) No doubt taken poorly by the low prestige attached to painting, he left the school in 1929.(65) Klee departed as well, in 1931.(66) It is clear in both cases that Klee, and Schlemmer's decisions were prompted in part by a complete ban on activities related to painting within the Bauhaus in 1928.(67)

By no stretch of the imagination can it be claimed that Schlemmer or Klee were not skilled and visionary artists worthy of adding their own skills and experience to the Bauhaus' groundbreaking and egalitarian style of pedagogy. Each sought to reconcile their personal inclinations with the ideology of the Bauhaus as they understood it. Paul Klee taught glass painting to expand his fascination with color into the architectural realm.(68) Schlemmer sought to manipulate perspective in such a way that "the perspectives of actual and pictorial space would flow into and interpenetrate one another."(69)

Yet in the ferocity of their attack on what they perhaps saw as a pillar of pre-war society, the idea of the artist as interpreter for divinity,(70) the Bauhaus leadership fragmented their community with a dogma of formalism that banished the visual arts to low standing.(71) In their attempt to banish mysticism and eliminate class boundaries, a hierarchy was nonetheless created that suppressed undesirable ideas. One could almost hear the echo of Goebbels's words, though in reverse: "What matters is not one's ability, but rather one's intention." Stated more simply, great ideas that could not

be translated into the "architectonic spirit" could not be entertained at the Bauhaus.

With this understanding of the shape of the artistic hierarchy, one can begin to address both the Bauhauslers and the Nazis on an issue about which they both had firm opinions: the matter of class. The idea of the artist as a divisive, classist individual is one that figures heavily, by clear admissions, in the Bauhaus doctrine.(72) Throughout the formative stages of the nation-state in Europe, the archetypical court artist had existed as a figure close to the monarch, and a representative of - what was perceived by the 1930s - antiquated ideas on absolute authority which could be partially blamed for the advent of the Great War.(73)(74)

In the early modern period, even before the war, artists in many areas had begun a gradual but unmistakable shift in focus, leading them to depict subjects of everyday life.(75) Painters of the French Realist school began an unflinching examination of the conditions of the very poor.(76) This was an enormous departure from the aristocratic or highly ideological paintings of the previous era, and the work of many Realists shows a burgeoning concern for the role of the artists in relation to society.(77) Concurrently, a number of pioneering artists, such as Manet, challenged preconceptions about what subjects were unacceptable or unacceptable in the realm of high art.(78)

These trends helped shape the early German reaction to the draconian peace accords that followed World War I. Painters of the Weimar Republic favored descriptive qualities over emotional ones; "New Objectivity" and its associated movements were used to shine a critical light on the Republic and express concerns about widespread depravity and violence.(79) Reacting against the idealistic promises of Romanticism and German Expressionism, these artists viewed themselves unabashedly as a force for social consciousness and change.(80)

The overall German response in the arts to the end of the war was distinctly egalitarian in that both the rich and the poor were held accountable for the failings of the post-war society. The occupants of slums were the targets of aesthetic slander just as surely as the rich and influential. The notion that art was a transformative force which could, in part, illuminate class inequalities and injustice was adopted on a meta-level by the Bauhauslers, who reached across class lines in two ways: their aesthetic beliefs, as mentioned earlier, and their integration of industrial techniques.

The Bauhaus was at the forefront of a new idea of integration between art and technology that also reflected a redefinition of class. Bauhaus products were meant to be practical and economical, lending themselves easily to reproduction by machinery.(81) The architectonic spirit demanded that form and function achieve as close a unity as possible.(82) The individual touch was to be minimized to better encapsulate the high virtue of practicality.(83) In this way, if a room held both a chair and a table of Bauhaus design, neither the chair nor the table was to take precedence, as neither of the objects' designers were to take precedence. Though by necessity the Bauhaus program encapsulates a particular mindset, it aspires to objectivity not only in the aesthetic but also in the philosophical sense.

Take, for example, the archetypal Bauhaus chair or door handle. Even in cases where the object has more than one function, all functions are emphasized equally, and without granting priority to any. The door handle must facilitate both the opening and locking of the door, but the sense of restriction that a lock implies is de-emphasized by the use of pure geometry of the surrounding keyhole shape. In subsequent iterations of the design, the keyhole function is replaced on the interior side by a small button. The essential "handle-ness" of the door handle is what is at issue, not the door handle individually or in any way as a decorative object. Material forms and their functions are reduced, insofar as possible, to the extension of the user's will; the object becomes an "icon," and can be understood as similar to the way in which a icon on a computer desktop leads us seamlessly to a particular function, or program when clicked.

A glimpse at the proposed changes and additions in terms of architecture that Hitler envisioned illustrates that the Nazis had no similar sense of thrift in the Bauhaus manner. However, in the Nazi application of technology and their subsequent reduction of physical realities to containers for-and implements of-the will (and in their case an overarching racial will), the Nazi and Bauhaus programs elicit startling comparisons on the philosophical level. The Nazi use of technology as an equalizer that served to both reduce labor and eliminate various kinds of distinctions-in the end, fundamental distinctions between right and wrong, constructive and destructive-shows the radically different and dangerous responses to the use of technology to shape both the physical and sociocultural world.

Hitler's disastrous legacy is marked by a single achievement that at first seems incongruous: the Autobahn. Seen in a logistical context, it is clear why a dictator with vast territorial ambitions would wish to better link the various resources in his domain. However, in the Hitlerian context of rerouting indigenous cultural energies to create a world of palpable racial will and overcoming, the Autobahn becomes both more sinister and more familiar in retrospect. The enfolding of internal territorial boundaries so that distances are reduced as much as possible toward a compressed geographical singularity is both a development arising out of the railroad system and one foreshadowing our current climate of globalization. Furthermore, the individual participation of Germans in the

Autobahn system - in the sense of climbing into the "People's Car" and asserting the transformation of the land into a medium for their specific conveyance-represents in the very real way a sense of functionalism and minimalism applied to nature itself.(84)

In the Nazi conception, all of the individual ranks and positions within society were to be consolidated into two, or perhaps three levels: those who were racially pure and desirable, those who were not, and the ultimate leader who would serve as a living embodiment of a new form of civic religion that placed Hitler himself and the racial ideal at the center of its soteriology.(85) One can discourse for volumes on the inherent failings of this system, its extreme injustices, and various gradients of dominance and submission caused by the presence or absence of access to force, which creates a new class hierarchy on the basis of violence; however, for our purposes it is most important to compare ideas, particularly those ideas in which their adherents sincerely believed. In those terms, then, it is an unfortunate necessity to examine in brief the ultimate expression of Nazi minimalism: the ethnic death camps that claimed the lives of millions of Jews, homosexuals, gypsies, and other "undesirables."

Much has been said of the "banality of evil" represented by Nazi bureaucrats like Adolph Eichmann, who participated in formulating genocide without an apparent sense of personal moral repugnance.(86) The amount of mathematical and material logistics required in the transportation and destruction of millions of people cannot be underestimated, and the philosophical example of the then-modern production line looms large within the landscape of the camps. The detainment and slaughter of millions was reduced to questions of transportation, personnel, equipment, and interchangeable raw materials - prisoners - in which human misery was the final product.(87)

Where the Bauhauslers sought to minimize the material forms of the world around them while also integrating their vision into new productive capabilities, they did so in order to create a language of architectural interchange that could be applied and adapted to human needs. Though there was an ideological component which led to class conflict within the school, the ideological or social component of the Bauhaus world was provided by others; the style was "International" in the sense that it could be made to function within any environment with a minimum of conflicting messages, even though it was in a very real sense the product of European minds within a German context at a particular time.

The Nazis, with their access to all of the same productive capacities, and facing the same problems of disunity, created a system that - in the actual execution of its aims - was stripped of cultural signifiers other than those of base production. Annihilation was the only way to achieve a final state of class unity which the Nazis believed was possible when the Greater German Reich incorporated within its borders all Aryans, and mechanical production, coal, steel, and replaceable parts were the means to this end. Concentration camps were anonymous and efficient, creating conditions under which not only physical delineations such as distance; fundamental philosophical delineations of right and wrong, good and evil, were brought together toward a unity.

Finally, some attention must be paid to architecture, the final goal of the Bauhaus program and something in which Hitler himself held great personal interest; most of Nazi architect Albert Speer's projects were based upon the Fuhrer's own sketches.(88) As mentioned before, there are few extant examples of Nazi German architecture because of the short duration of the Nazi dictatorship. With exceptions such as the Reich Chancellery, which underwent some remodeling in the period, most Nazi "architecture" consisted of periodic and relatively temporary exhibitions of stagecraft for the purpose of holding party rallies and other kinds of rituals reinforcing the civic mysticism of the Volk: Speer's 'cathedral of light,' a stage delineated by flak searchlights, is one example.(89) Of architectural plans intended to be more enduring, clues can be ascertained that bear out two major conclusions: projects were to be executed on a monumental scale, and projects were to embrace the power of the state, as representative of the racial will, to transform the landscape without reservation.

Because of its singular significance, the Reich Chancellery serves as a case example. In terms of scale, the redesigned building - and in particular, its interior - demonstrates megalomania tinged with an envy of the past. The faux Roman exterior was stark, leading visitors between two enormous Arno Breker statues and beneath a massive eagle gripping a swastika.(90) Beyond doors seventeen feet high, one would find a room of mosaic panels and beyond that, a marble gallery twice as long as the gallery of mirrors at Versailles.(91) Hitler's office was replete with mythological symbolism: Mars and Minerva, the god and goddess of war, were featured in panels on the side of his desk.(92) A cartouche over one door depicted a knight with Hitler's face being pursued by death and the devil.(93)

Surviving notes by Nazi architect Albert Speer, as well as documents and models recovered from Hitler's bunker following the war, provide a vision into the dictator's ultimate plan for Berlin: nothing less than a complete remodeling of the city.(94) While it is difficult to reconstruct a precise picture of any architectural or civil planning merits the proposed renovations may have had, one could freely characterize the plan as "extensive." Central Berlin was to be redesigned to conform to a grid, and several massive projects, monuments to the Reich, were to be undertaken.(95) Munich was also to

be extensively transformed as a new center of German culture.(96) Thus, the symbolic heart of the German cultural state and identity would be transformed to reflect the influence of Hitler.

By contrast, Walter Gropius denotes as some key features of the New Architecture represented by the Bauhaus its "simple and sharply modeled designs,"(97) overarching rejection of ornamentation,(98) and a sense of lightness created by the accessibility of natural light and rejection of "anchoring buildings ponderously into the ground."(99) Rationalization of architectural forms was seen as a "purifying agency"(100) Through it, "concise and economical solutions" amendable to aesthetic beauty would be found.(101) Insofar as the Bauhauslers can be said to have pursued the fundamental principles of classical architecture, their products were much more in keeping with those sensibilities than Nazi German attempts at same. The latter included such failures as the German pavilion at the Paris International Exhibit of 1937, which demonstrated overt doctrinal confusion with its panache of unrelated structural elements.(102) Even where Bauhaus designs embraced verticality, habitable spaces were built to human scale in a matter suitably familiar to the humanism of the ancient Greeks. The Bauhaus building situated in Dessau closely conformed to these ideals. (Fig. 4)

Fig. 4 / 1928, Dessau, reproduced from Wingler, *Bauhaus: Weimar, Dessau, Berlin, Chicago*, 400

Though it would be something of a stretch to claim that the Bauhaus was originally intended as a global response to a global crisis, rather than a regional response built on the need to restore harmony and order to the chaotic German state, it is worth noting that Bauhaus ideas were rapidly globalized, partially as a result of their enemies' actions. Nazi policies precipitated an exodus of German Modernists, including the Bauhauslers: Walter Gropius founded a school of design in Chicago(103); Kandinsky found himself participating in exhibitions in Paris and New York(104); Klee settled in Switzerland, though he did not live through the war(105); Albers became a leading instructor at the influential Black Mountain College in North Carolina(106); and the list goes on.

In consequence, Bauhaus designs were adopted and adapted around the world. Conversely, the convoluted Hitlerian vision of Neoclassicism, of a global provincialism with a Nazi outlook, led even the dictator himself to despair, claiming in outrage at a viewing of works for the annual Great German Art Exhibition that "we in Germany have no artists whose works are worthy of being hung in this splendid building."(107) Hitler failed in terms of both constructing a new Nazi aesthetic and destroying the modernist art he believed was "degenerate." It was his own fanaticism that drove the Bauhauslers and other German modern artists to take flight to democratic countries where their ideas were more apt to be welcomed: Only about a decade after the Bauhaus' final closing in 1933, Nazi power - even the power of the entire Axis - was continually beaten back and eventually extinguished.(108) Not a single vestige of Nazi power survived beyond 1945, while the intellectual antecedents of Bauhaus work continue to be seen around us even to the present day.

As historians look back upon the intellectual currents of the previous century, it is vital to any true understanding of what the future may hold that they do not fall into the fallacy of the excluded middle. It is no indictment to say that the Bauhauslers and the Nazis addressed the same problems in radically different ways; it is intellectually dishonest to ignore the workings of similar forces because one response was desirable while the other was vile. Both the Bauhaus and the Nazi Party were products of the modern continental European mind; both shared common experiences of deprivation, common uncertainties about the future, and even, to some degree, common articles of faith about the capabilities of humankind. Both looked toward the past in order to obtain a clear vision of the future, and saw the means to their desired ends in terms of practicalities. And both certainly saw a place of ascendancy, a birthright of world-transformation, in their aestheticized conceptions of humanity. The brute physical force of fascism, of course, surrendered to the ongoing revolution of the mind personified by such talents as the people of the Bauhaus, who combined courage and creativity at a time when insight like theirs was most needed by the world. Thus, their work continues to bequeath its brilliant testaments while the remnants of the fascist ideal remain as scars on the mental and physical landscape. The unreserved judgment of history has worked to inoculate the community of nations against the plague of Nazism. But, in order to make certain that such disease should never

return, it is necessary to examine in full sweep how similar challenges in similar circumstances might drive related groups in history to such astoundingly divergent extremes.

1 John Maynard Keynes' *The Economic Consequences of the Peace* is a good general overview of the economic and social upheaval following the Treaty of Versailles, though a read through the document itself is most illuminating in terms of its substantial punitive measures against Germany. John Maynard Keynes, *The Economic Consequences of the Peace* (New York: Cosimo Classics, 2006.)
2 Gustav Stressemann: *Weimar's Greatest Statesman* chronicles the struggles of the Weimar government to maintain cohesion. Extreme duress applied by the French government as well as a number of internal crises led to factionalism within the Republic. This help set the stage for a popular movement on the scale of National Socialism to capitalize on popular hopes for Germany's return to international prominence. Jonathan Wright, Gustav Stresemann: *Weimar's Greatest Statesman* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004.)
3 Ibid.
4 Christian Geelhaar, *Paul Klee and the Bauhaus* (Bath: Adams and Dart, 1973), 9.
5 Walter Gropius, *The New Architecture and the Bauhaus* (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 1965), 65.
6 Ibid.
7 *Fifty Years Bauhaus* (London: Royal Academy of Arts, 1968), 13.
8 Herbert Bayer et. al., Bauhaus: *Weimar 1919-1925 Dessau 1925-1928* (London: Seckler & Warburg, 1975), 16.
9 Ibid.
10 Hans M. Wingler, Bauhaus: Weimar, Dessau, Berlin, Chicago (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 1976), 30.
11 *Fifty Years Bauhaus*, 9
12 Frederic Spotts, *Hitler and the Power of Aesthetics* (New York: Overlook Press, 2004), 153.
13 Dawn Ades, Art and Power: Europe Under the Dictators, 1930-1945 (London: Thames and Hudson, 1995), 330.
14 Spotts, 123-129
15 Ibid., 152.
16 Peter Paret, *An Artist Against the Third Reich* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 33.
17 Eric Michaud, *The Cult of Art in Nazi Germany* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1996), 120.
18 Wingler, 93.
19 Ibid., 179.
20 Ibid., 189.
21 Even Propaganda Minister Joseph Goebbels, an occasional supporter of Modernism who decorated one of his official residences with Modernist art and commissioned a Modernist-style portrait of himself from Leo von Konig, abruptly ceases acquiring Modernist art in 1936, according to Petroupolis in *Art as Politics in the Third Reich*.
22 Paret, 8.
23 Ibid., 15.
24 Spotts, 25.
25 Ibid., 13.
26 Ibid., 14.
27 Ibid., 7.
28 Ibid., 6.
29 Spotts, 124.
30 Ibid.
31 Ibid., 138-139.
32 Ibid., 22.
33 Ibid.
34 Jean Gimpel, *The Cult of Art: Against Art and Artists* (Edinburgh: Polygon Sigma, 1991). The central thesis of the work concerns this theme.
35 Spotts, 97.
36 Ibid.
37 Ibid., 98.
38 Eric Michaud writes at length on this in his book of the same name; just as revealing for different reasons, Petroupolis' *Art as Politics in the Third Reich* discusses conspicuous art collecting and gifting among the Nazi hierarchs as an index of their political status. See Jonathan Petropoulos, *Art as Politics in the Third Reich* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1996), 41.
39 Spotts, 162.
40 Petropoulos, 41.
41 Paret, 193.
42 Spotts, 158.
43 Ibid.
44 See Michaud, unnumbered insert following 206, illustration 108a.
45 See Michaud, unnumbered insert following 206, Koble's "large statue of a woman," illustration. 78, and Hempfing's "Kneeling Nude," illustration 84, for characteristic examples.
46 Spotts, 53.

47 Ades, 332.

48 Petropoulos, 26.

49 Michaud, 148.

50 Jonathan Petropoulos, *The Faustian Bargain: The Art World in Nazi Germany* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002), 224.

51 Bayer et al., 16.

52 Geelhaar, 17.

53 Ibid., 9.

54 Bayer et. al., *Bauhaus Weimar 1919-1925 Dessau 1925-1928*, 16-17

55 Van Eyck is one of the first artists to have painted a self-portrait, that work being very cognizant of his status as a successful artist; in the *Arnolfini Wedding Portrait*, he cleverly inserted himself into high society by including his reflection in a mirror.

56 Paul Klee himself taught glass painting at the Bauhaus, but he is said to have devoted very little attention to the architectural project-having released only one small pamphlet on the impact of light coloration on room interiors. See Geelhaar, *Paul Klee and the Bauhaus*, 17-18.

57 Ingo Walther et. al., Art of the 20th Century (London: Taschen, 2003), 113.

58 Ibid.

59 Ibid.

60 Ibid.

61 Geelhaar, 16.

62 Walther et. al., 180.

63 Ibid.

64 Geelhaar, *Paul Klee*, 15.

65 Ibid., *Paul Klee*, 16.

66 Ibid.

67 Ibid., 14.

68 Ibid., 17.

69 Walther et. al., 181.

70 Ibid., 176.

71 Ibid., 178.

72 Bayer et. al., 8, 16.

73 *Gardner's Art Through the Ages: The Western Perspective, Vol. II* informs us that as early as 1644, Spanish painter Diego Velazquez fit comfortably within the corridors of royal power, creating numerous portraits of King Philip IV and even using one of his greatest masterpieces, *The Maids of Honor*, in large part as a testament to his own stature rather than that of the royal court, its ostensible subject. Kleiner, Fred S. & C. Mamiya, *Gardner's Art Through the Ages: The Western Perspective, Volume II (12th ed.)* (Belmont: Thomson Wadsworth), 2006.

74 Michalski Sergiusz, *New Objectivity* (Koln: Taschen, 2003), 16.

75 Kleiner et.al.,687.

76 Ibid.

77 Ibid., 689-690.

78 Ibid., 692.

79 Walther et. al., 184.

80 Ibid.

81 Gropius, 53-54.

82 Ibid., 34.

83 Ibid.

84 Spotts, 397.

85 Michaud, 26.

86 In *Eichmann in Jerusalem: A Report on the Banality of Evil*, Hannah Arendt makes several observations regarding Eichmann's apparent "normality" in an effort to draw popular scrutiny on the idea that Nazi war criminals were uniformly psychotic. *Hannah Arendt, Eichmann in Jerusalem: A Report on the Banality of Evil* (New York: Penguin Classics, 2006.

87 Various aspects of categorization, transportation, dehumanization and enslavement of prisoners bear on the idea of their use as an objectified component of a final Nazi aim. As Kogon discusses in his *The Theory and Practice of Hell*, the camps were totally self-sufficient constructions (40) predicated on the use of prisoner labor to make their existence possible. While some camps focused on the use of prisoner labor to aid the Nazi war effort, the regimentation of daily routine (addressed by Kogon beginning on 72), division of labor (likewise) and other aspects would not have been possible in the incarnation they took without both the military and the then-contemporary industrial example. Eugen Kogon, *The Theory and Practice of Hell* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2006).

88 Spotts, 312.

89 Ibid., 56.

90 Ibid., 363.

91 Ibid., 365-366.

92 Ibid.

93 Ibid.

94 Ibid., 352.

95 Ibid., 352-353.

96 Ibid., 368-369.
97 Gropius, 44.
98 Ibid.
99 Ibid.
100 Gropius, 23.
101 Ibid., 24.
102 Ades, 108.
103 Wingler, 192.
104 Ulrike Becks-Malorny, *Wassily Kandinsky 1866-1944: The Journey to Abstraction* (London: Taschen 2002), 196.
105 Eberhard Roters, *Painters of the Bauhaus* (New York: Frederick A. Praeger Publishers, 1969), 106.
106 Ibid, 194.
107 Spotts, 172.
108 *Fifty Years Bauhaus*, 9.