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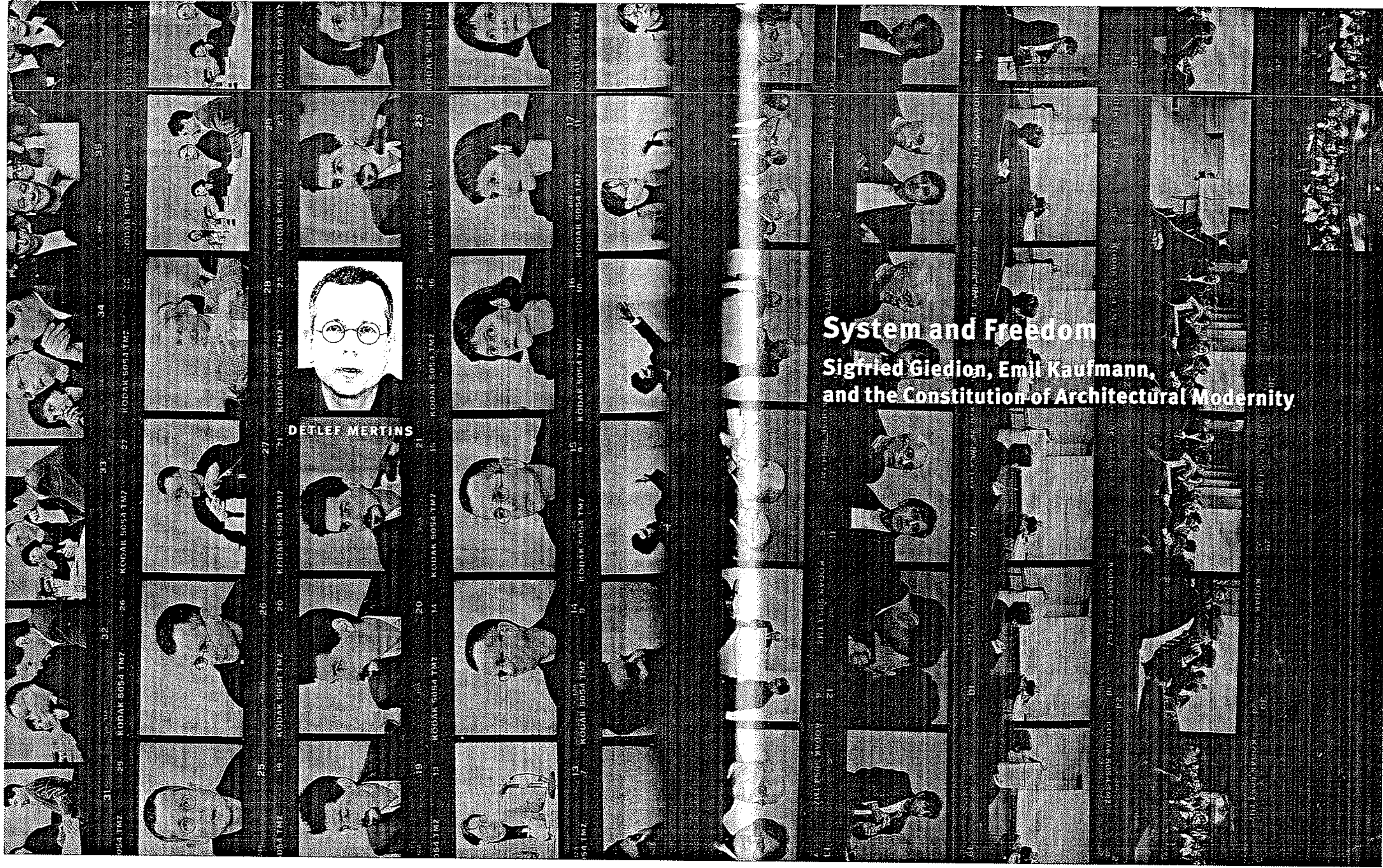
DETLEF MERTINS
System and Freedom
Sigfried Giedion, Emil Kaufmann, and the Constitution of Architectural Modernity
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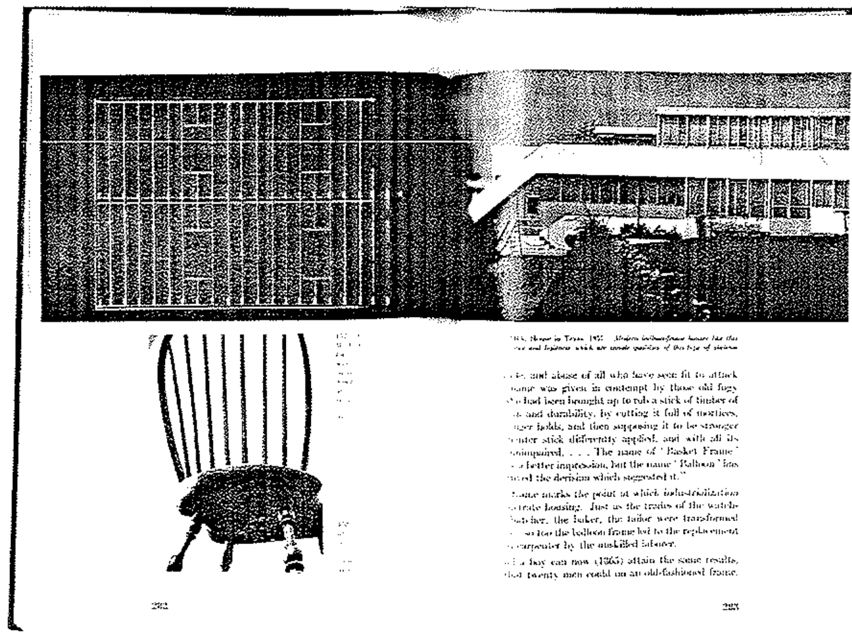
In his letter to Walter Gropius of October 25, 1937, Sigfried Giedion—the Swiss architectural historian, critic, and secretary of CIAM—explained that he had been working for the past several years on a history of the development of the modern era in terms of the various fields of knowledge and the relationship between life, architecture, and art, hoping to "make a contribution to the self-consciousness of the age."[1] Hoping as well for an invitation to lecture in the United States, where Gropius had recently assumed the chair of architecture at Harvard University, Giedion's letter was explicit in articulating his view of the challenge that still faced America, in terms that echo Gropius's early admiration of American engineering and his simultaneous disdain for America's historicist architecture. "Let us hope," wrote the historian, invoking the hierarchic distinction between a materialist *Zivilisation* and a redemptive *Kultur* so powerful in so many German intellectual traditions,[2] "that something half-way similar [to America's advances in technology] will be possible in the cultural sphere in the future." And more specifically, "Surely little depends on whether the people [in America] already have correct judgement. What seems to me important for today's culture is that today's ideas are not taken up as fashion, but rather organically so that later they may gain new potentials for development through American forces and strengths."

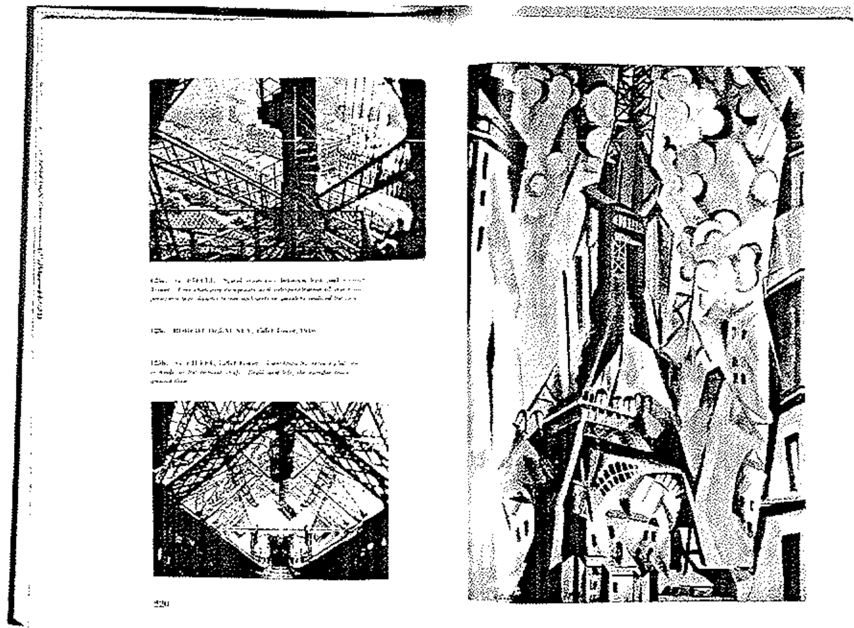
That Giedion's conception of the challenge in America accorded with Gropius's own is clear from the latter's reply, written only two months later to inform Giedion that he and Marcel Breuer had convinced their dean, the



(1)
Spread from Sigfried Giedion's *Space, Time and Architecture* (1941) showing a balloon frame, a Windsor chair, and a balloon-frame house designed by Richard J. Neutra

influential modernizer of architectural education Joseph Hudnut,[3] to make the case for Giedion in the Norton Committee and that Hudnut, in turn, had succeeded in getting the committee to nominate Giedion as its first choice, over the author Thomas Mann. Gropius urged Giedion to accept, "because it is really important and will not only give you much publicity but will, at a single stroke, bring your ideas to a wide audience." In agreeing to the internationally prestigious series of eight lectures, a semester at Harvard, an honorarium of ten thousand dollars (the equivalent of Gropius's annual salary), and publication by Harvard University Press, Giedion also accepted Gropius's charge to him: "Since my coming and Hudnut's being here has now put the whole question of architecture in everyone's mind in a real sense, I thought that there could be no one better than you to widen the gap and give truly fundamental explanations of our movement."[4]

As a textbook for modern architects, the success of Giedion's *Space, Time and Architecture* is legendary.[5] After it was first published in 1941 (following two frustrating years at the press), Walter Gropius called it "undoubtedly the best book of its kind." The historian Kenneth John Conant, also of Harvard, hailed the book as "wonderful . . . an adventure in international scholarship" that "reads like a detective story. . . . Architectural students . . . say that once started on it, they have read it the night through."[6] Elizabeth Coit, writing for *Architectural Record*, commended it for incorporating the social institutions of daily life and recognizing American developments such as the balloon frame (1), steel skeleton, and elevator—concluding that "rarely has our life been so vividly presented."[7] John A. Hartell, in *ARTnews*, appreciated that Giedion's treatment of new developments as a "new tradition" allowed the confusion over the issue of "style" to subside—"the aim of reassuring us by establishing 'that, in spite of apparent confusion, there is . . . unity in our present civilization' may or may not have been accomplished in this volume. But one and all should now be convinced that architecture since 1800, for all of its fluttering, has not been *quite* a headless chicken."[8] Henry-Russell Hitchcock told readers of *Parnassus* that "every scholar and student of architecture in America should own and master [the book] in detail," its insights into the American story "pregnant" for further research and its understanding of Frank Lloyd Wright more "penetrating" than that of any previous foreigner.[9] And Philip Johnson, in his article "Architecture in 1941," singled out the book by the "eminent Swiss critic" as "the most important work on general architecture to appear" that year —"an ambitious history of the background of modern architecture written as a morphology" that included the "especially



(2)
Spread from Sigfried Giedion's *Space, Time and Architecture* (1941) showing two views of the Eiffel Tower and Robert Delauney's painting of it

noteworthy" stories of "the effect of engineering on aesthetics" and "the effect of social patterns on architecture."[10]

In the book, Giedion argued that a new "space-conception" defined the modern era, structuring art and science, buildings and cities, production and reception, just as perspective had during the Renaissance. Having found affinities between the spatial effects of engineering structures, post-cubist art, modern mathematics, and the new architecture, Giedion called the new post-perspectival space conception "space-time." Elaborating on the use of the term in both art and science, he distinguished space-time by its openness to relativity, incompleteness, dynamism, and the constitutive ambiguity of the mutual mediation of subject and object.[11] In contrast to the graphic rules of perspective, he presented space-time as a phenomenology of spatial perception in the unrepresentable, yet equally scientific, fourth dimension, in which inside and outside, subject and object, were considered interwoven. Informed by theories of *Raumgestaltung* (space-creation) proffered by the art historian August Schmarsow in the 1890s and reiterated by the artists Theo van Doesburg and László Moholy-Nagy in the mid-1920s,[12] Giedion's notion of space-time focused on the cognitive status of buildings as contingent on the partial and shifting perceptions of observers moving through and around them. He conflated this with theories of image-formation coming from the discourse of "new optics" in the late 1920s—in which new worlds were seen to appear through the expansion of vision made possible by scientific instruments, airplanes, photography, and film. Rather than presuming to comprehend buildings definitively from a single viewpoint, Giedion deferred cognitive closure indefinitely and kept the process—like Le Corbusier's concrete Dom-ino skeleton—"eternally open," the subject forming and perceiving space while being formed by and for it. In order to grasp the true nature of space, Giedion suggested that "the observer must project himself through it" and cited the dizzying stairway of the upper levels of the Eiffel Tower as one of the first opportunities for this **(2)**. Le Corbusier's Dom-ino represented, for Giedion, the means for making that experience structural to mass society in the form of housing.

Giedion's enthusiasm for such space-time experiences erupts at key moments in his text to invoke the ideal of hovering excitedly above the ground, dissolving the boundary between artifice and nature into the dynamic infinite beyond representation—in likening Borromini's dome at Sant Ivo to Picasso's *Head* and Tatlin's tower; Valadier's terracing Piazza del Popolo to van Doesburg's open assemblage of transparent hovering planes; the dematerialization of Paxton's Crystal Palace to the atmospheric effects of Turner's paintings; the pin-joint of the Palais des Machine to Degas' pirouetting ballerina; the opened volumes and suspended planes of the Bauhaus to Picasso's first double-faced portrait; and above all, the simultaneous assertion and denial of volumes in Le Corbusier's Pessac housing and the hovering transparency of his purist still lifes.[13] The importance assigned by Giedion to these effects is revealed most clearly in the almost ecstatic, and hardly believable, prose of his earlier, more youthful book—*Building in France. Building in Iron. Building in Ferro-Concrete* of 1928. There he defended the paper-thinness of the buildings at Pessac—their solid volumes eaten away with cubes of air, rows of windows passing suddenly into the sky, corners merging into one another, collapsing into two-dimensionality only to spring back into depth a few steps later. For him they "create—as in a landscape of snow under certain light—that dematerialization of fixed borders, within which it is no longer possible to distinguish between rising and falling, and walking feels like being in the clouds."[14]

Notwithstanding the sales success and general endorsement of *Space, Time and Architecture*, most reviewers did express serious reservations, which focused on three interrelated issues: Giedion's Euro-

peanness, the architects that he chose to emphasize, and what they called his aesthetic or philosophical approach to the rich historical material that he assembled. From the *Art Bulletin* to the *Nation*,[15] the reviews reveal an overarching suspicion (not surprising for those historians largely uninfluenced by German aesthetics and art history) of Giedion's neo-Kantian structural categories and his neo-Romantic notion of art as the making of symbols capable of mediating the antinomies of modernity—especially what he called the tragic split between reason and emotion—and working productively and performatively toward a future system already inscribed within it. Taking his examples to be arbitrary and his history incomplete, his critics also failed to register that in approaching the past from the perspective of contemporary "questions"[16]—criticized by John Summerson as "philosophical," and by Nikolaus Pevsner as "topical" and "creative"[17]—Giedion did not intend to codify the present but rather to open up the potentiality of the future within the existing system of mediation. He also opened himself to charges of vagueness, favoritism, and dogmatism by basing his selection of works and his critical judgment of them on a distinction whose purpose was rarely understood—on the extent to which they manifested what he called "constituent facts" structuring the modern epoch, in distinction from "transitory facts" or surface symptoms of the unreliable manifold of appearances within the flow of historical change.[18] His immanent critique of the system of modern production and consumption, his ideal of open constructions and expanded vision in space-time, and his ethical pursuit of self-overcoming through a purifying, essentializing, and rationalizing self-discipline of means were largely dismissed as obscure aestheticism.[19]

In his review, Hitchcock had hinted that Giedion's lectures were "none too well received," and indeed one of the students at Harvard, H. Seymour Howard Jr., reviewing the book in the student journal *Task*, recalled that:

> A large proportion of the students from the Harvard School of Design went regularly and were stimulated by his aesthetic sense, which he was able to share with his audience. But they were also puzzled and bewildered by his theory and by his historical approach. An unmistakably metaphysical air permeated his thought.
> The wealth of factual material which Dr. Giedion presented so overwhelmed his listeners, however, that many felt that further study on their part would clarify his ideas for them. The publication of this book has permitted this study. Unfortunately, the bewilderment remains; the metaphysical worm still eats out the heart of the apple.[20]

Howard's strident and positivist critique turned on two points: a disappointment that Giedion simply asserted vague parallels between architecture, industry, theory, and social needs without explaining their relationship in specific historical terms and without "a few examples of laboratory and drafting-board techniques" that might serve to guide students; and a concern that Giedion's insistence on creative intuition emerging from the unknown precluded him from clearly stating "the fundamental problems of today" and "the methods by which they can and will be solved." In the context of America restructuring and modernizing in the wake of the Great Depression and Roosevelt's New Deal, evident, for instance, in the editorial focus of *Task* on social responsibility, public housing programs, new techniques, and economical solutions, Howard was eager to "analyze, study and solve these problems, not as superior people who will produce great solutions from the clouds, but in close day-to-day collaborative work with other architects, and with the people as a whole."

Giedion replied to Howard's "purely materialistic attitude" by amplifying his case that "the influence of feeling is often regarded as unimportant, but inevitably permeates the decisions of men." While he acknowledged an affinity between Howard's views and the "pure functionalism" of the late 1920s in Europe, he warned against this for risking "a belated imitation of certain European formulas" that had ignored the emotional demands of the people just when in Europe "questions far beyond the purely materialistic have become decisive." Giedion suggested that, in the final instance, it was the irrational that governed:

> It is not so easy to find an expression today for things which cannot be explained by materialistic reasons only.
> There is something that appears suddenly in the logical analysis! The irrational. It cannot be explained exactly and governs, nevertheless, the decision whether a building will be accepted or not by public opinion. . . .
> It may be that an architectonic conception which is moved only by the help of an all too circumscribed materialistic comprehension of the world leads just to solutions from the clouds.[21]

* * *

What are we to make of this combination of success and failure in the reception of Giedion's book, of the fact that its "higher" philosophical and artistic aspirations were either ignored or dismissed; that his call for self-discipline to transmute technology into the means of ineffable poetics—into "*construction spirituelle*"—failed to win an audience; and that his historical portrait of industrialization may have served, instead, to simply legitimate the rush of modernization that he hoped would transcend itself in a new architecture of unity and harmony? In asking these questions, it is not my purpose to either defend Giedion against reductive interpretations and critiques or to side with these critics. Rather, Giedion's failure seems to me to be symptomatic of a larger problematic within the modernist avant-garde, one with a number of related manifestations. My argument will be that the failure in Giedion's reception points, first, to an internal failure within his efforts to resolve tensions that he claimed to be resolving and that this, in turn, shows how Giedion's history was structured by an *aporia* inscribed into the history of the cultural avant-garde from its inception. To substantiate my claim that Giedion's failure was symptomatic, consider two other instances—first, a tension between Hitchcock and Le Corbusier, and second, Philip Johnson's reading of Giedion's less well-known contemporary, the Viennese private scholar Emil Kaufmann.

* * *

In his book of 1948, *Painting Toward Architecture*,[22] Hitchcock criticized Le Corbusier in a way that stands in curious proximity to the architect's own book of that year, *New World of Space*.[23] Considered together, these books bear witness to a conflict between the desire for a new normative order that the historian

continued to call "style"—a broadly binding "visual language" or "pattern" valued for its own sake as an index of a new normative taste appropriate to the historical period called modern—and an equally strong desire for a dimension of architectural experience that might be described as expansive, open and indeterminate, poetic, free, even transcendent. Surely it was no coincidence that the frontispieces of the two books were identical—a still life of 1925 by Le Corbusier (signed Jeanneret) owned by the Herman Miller Company, whose collection of abstract art was the motive and focus of Hitchcock's book. Nor could it be an accident that both focused on the relationship between architecture and painting, with the architect's central theme being the object of the historian's skepticism. Notwithstanding his privileging of Le Corbusier for the frontispiece, Hitchcock held that "the theoretical relationship between painting and architecture has been much more clearly stated [by Walter Gropius] than in the writings of Le Corbusier," and preferred the "*systematic* approach [of the Bauhaus] to the study of design in all fields" over Le Corbusier, who he reproached for simply presuming "that the study of modern painting leads in a somewhat intangible way to the formation of a relevant modern taste in all the arts."[24]

For Hitchcock, "abstract art"—with its systematic and generalizable constructions of lines and planes in two and three dimensions—was the true and legitimate art of the modern era, whose "potential value to contemporary architects" could be understood as instrumental for a company, such as Herman Miller, producing modern furniture for a mass market. It offered the key to a new universality, which nevertheless required the retraining of both artists and viewers, production and reception—the retraining of subjectivity to conform to the apparent objectivity of the emerging new epoch. Correcting the "distortions" of early cubism, whose architectonic quality he considered so obviously suited to architecture, Hitchcock presented abstract art as the common base for nonimitative and nonperspectival modern art and architecture.

For Le Corbusier, on the other hand, the task of architecture was not limited to the realization of a new system. He claimed retrospectively that the relationship between his plastic research and his architecture had, for thirty years, circled around what he called the "miracle of ineffable space" and the "consummation of plastic emotion." While his desire for an architecture of powerful emotions had been a crucial aspect of purist aesthetics, there was no residue of his purist critique of cubism as his prose attempted to portray his experience of an ineffable, inexpressible spatiality—"a boundless depth opens up, effaces the walls, drives away contingent presences." In fact, he now linked this almost religious experience of architecture to the "'magnification' of space that some of the artists of my generation attempted around 1910, during the wonderfully creative flights of cubism. They spoke of the fourth dimension with intuition and clairvoyance."[25] The fourth dimension, he continued, "is the moment of limitless escape evoked by an exceptionally just consonance of the plastic means employed." Neither the fourth dimension nor the experience of ineffable space nor the just consonance of means was seemingly of value for Hitchcock. Yet they were central to that other historian, Sigfried Giedion, whose interpretation of both Le Corbusier *and* Gropius was actually structured by his conception of architecture in space-time. Could *this* have played a role in Hitchcock's curious failure even to acknowledge Giedion's prior treatment of the significance of cubist and post-cubist art for the new architecture, so strategic, after all, to his historical narrative in *Space, Time and Architecture*, published just seven years earlier and so "successful" that a second and enlarged edition would come out the following year?

* * *

Emil Kaufmann too came to the United States in this period, although not for a prestigious lecture series but as an immigrant, leaving Austria after Hitler's takeover in 1938. And Kaufmann too had his American debut at Harvard, although not for Gropius but for the American Society of Architectural Historians meeting in the summer of 1942. For both Giedion and Kaufmann, coming to America was marked by a greater emphasis in their writings on a systemic conception of modernity. While Kaufmann did not affiliate himself with the architects of his generation as actively as Giedion did, nevertheless in the early 1930s he had already mobilized his pioneering research on eighteenth-century French neoclassical architecture and theory to support what he took to be the revolutionary, or at least republican, ambitions of modern architecture, at that very moment being closed down as Hitler dissolved the Weimar Republic.

Informed by the polemical writings of Le Corbusier and his avant-garde contemporaries, Kaufmann's first book, *Von Ledoux bis Le Corbusier: Ursprung und Entwicklung der Autonomen Architektur* (*From Ledoux to Le Corbusier: Origin and Development of Autonomous Architecture*) of 1933,[26] presented Claude-Nicolas Ledoux as a genius struggling in the late eighteenth century to break free from what Kaufmann depicted as the feudal, absolutist order of the baroque (which for him included the Renaissance and neoclassicism), having awakened to the idea of autonomy, individual self-determination, and republican self-government. For Kaufmann, Ledoux was to modern architecture what Kant had been to modern philosophy, Rousseau to modern political theory, and the *Sturm und Drang* to modern German literature. Kaufmann interpreted the forms of Ledoux's architecture and utopian city as structurally homologous to these other manifestations of the idea of autonomy. Individualism, revolution, and republicanism in architecture were seen to be manifest in prismatic building elements (unadorned surfaces, windowless walls, unframed openings, and flat roofs), the display of material integrity (stone had become stone once more), and above all, the pure forms of primary geometry (cubes, pyramids, and spheres). Instead of the melded together cohesion of the baroque, in which parts were subordinated to the whole, he identified a new architectonic system of self-determined, cognitively transparent elements (natural signs) assembled like a toy into geometrically regulated freestanding buildings in which the relationship between parts would similarly be free and immediately legible—the direct, sober, and lawful physiognomic expression of inner necessity (purpose, function, and character). For Kaufmann, taking his cue from Kant, "architecture-in-itself"[27] marked a supersensible freedom from necessity, the conversion of matter into formal self-presentation, which he considered the ultimate form of emancipation. Instead of the pictorialism and organicism of the baroque city, Ledoux's ideal city of Chaux was no longer conceived as spatially bounded or pictorially framed, no longer the heart of a living whole

but simply a geometric point around which the parts arranged themselves anorganically as independent subject-citizens (3).

Kaufmann's lecture of 1942, titled "Claude-Nicolas Ledoux: Inaugurator of a New Architectural System," signaled a shift of emphasis away from the authority of absolute forms toward a systematic constitution of architectural modernity.[28] This shift supported a broadening of his historical research to incorporate not only Ledoux's contemporaries in the so-called *Revolutionsarchitektur* in France—especially Etienne-Louis Boullée and Jean-Jacques Lequeu—but ultimately the "architecture of reason" throughout all of Europe, with the exception of Germany.[29] While his earlier writings had already proffered the notion that autonomous architecture entailed a pavilionized and decentralized system of composition, the lecture of 1942 inverted the priority between form and system for the sake of what he called a "new individualism." Adapting his rhetoric to America, he dropped all reference to Kant and Rousseau and instead presented his republican ideals in terms of a constitutional framework for free individuation. He continued to link Ledoux to Le Corbusier, comparing the former's Houses for Peace and Union to the latter's Mundaneum of 1928 on the basis that both aimed to realize Enlightenment ideals. He called Ledoux's Residence of the Surveyors of the River Loue so successful as an *architecture parlante* "that one might easily suppose some present-day expressionist had devised it for an hydraulic power plant."[30] And he observed that Ledoux's spherical Shelter for the Rural Guards, "born of the Revolution" had been "revived" as the Perisphere by Wallace Harrison "to dominate New York's [1939] Worlds Fair." Yet Kaufmann insisted that "the ultimate goal of the Revolutionists was to set up a new system. . . . Forms themselves are secondary factors. . . . It is the same in social and in artistic life."[31]

(3)
Page from Emil Kaufmann's
Von Ledoux bis Le Corbusier (19...
showing Ledoux's ideal city of C...

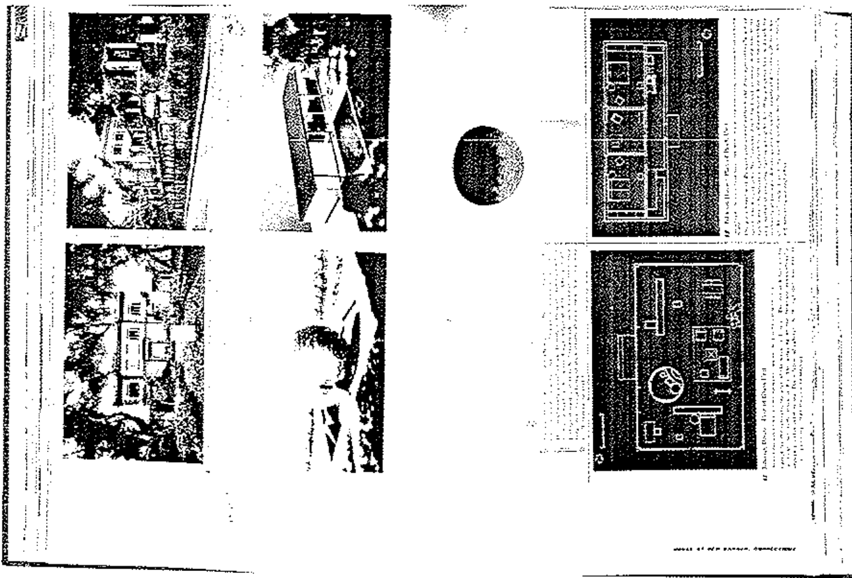
The shift from form to system marks a refinement of Kaufmann's efforts to think through the implications of Kant's critical philosophy for architecture. For a contradiction had operated throughout the earlier book between assertions of being and accounts of striving, between stating that "instead of appearances only being was now valid"[32] and citing Friedrich Hölderlin: "We are nothing. What we search for is everything."[33] Despite his apparent codification of autonomous forms, elements, and types, Kaufmann was concerned that autonomy not collapse into mechanism, and that instead (in keeping with Kant) it transform technique and labor into the free play of aesthetic judgment. That he feared the risk of mere technique is clear from this criticism of J. N. L. Durand's mathematization of architecture as an "impoverished schematization."[34] Kaufmann also explicitly refused the false archaism of neoclassicism, which he associated with the political and cultural empire. Winkelmann, Goethe, and Schiller had nothing to say to Ledoux, he wrote, "because what was for them a matter of form, was for him a matter of principle, for them precedents that could be taken as guides, for him the foundations of building itself to which he wanted to descend in order to begin, as it were, again at the beginning."[35] In 1942, Kaufmann called this frustrated and unfulfillable striving a "sublime ethics."[36]

None of the reviews of Kaufmann's various writings recognized the extent to which he was driven by this desire to install constitutively an obligation to moral autonomy struggling against native heteronomy. In *Von Ledoux bis Le Corbusier*, this tension had been figured not only in terms of historical periods, but also as opposing forces within the new epoch *and* within the human subject itself—the will to self-regulation struggling against the dictate of external nature, speculative reason against empirical matter, the synthetic against the organic, and the godly, enlightened, and pure against the beastly, dark, and corrupt. For Kaufmann, the history of this epochal struggle was not dialectical and produced neither synthesis nor an inexorable teleological movement. Instead, the irresolution of Ledoux's work, his inability to discharge the heteronomous once and for all, was symptomatic of striving for an adequate representation of the formless infinite encountered at the dynamic limits of progressive mathematization—a necessarily incomplete and contingent hermeneutic circling around the mystery of reason striving, yet unable, to achieve transparency unto itself. Every act demanded that the struggle for self-determination be taken up anew, returning incessantly to origins to repeat the founding gesture—a perpetual cultural revolution enacted on a timeless tabula rasa.[37]

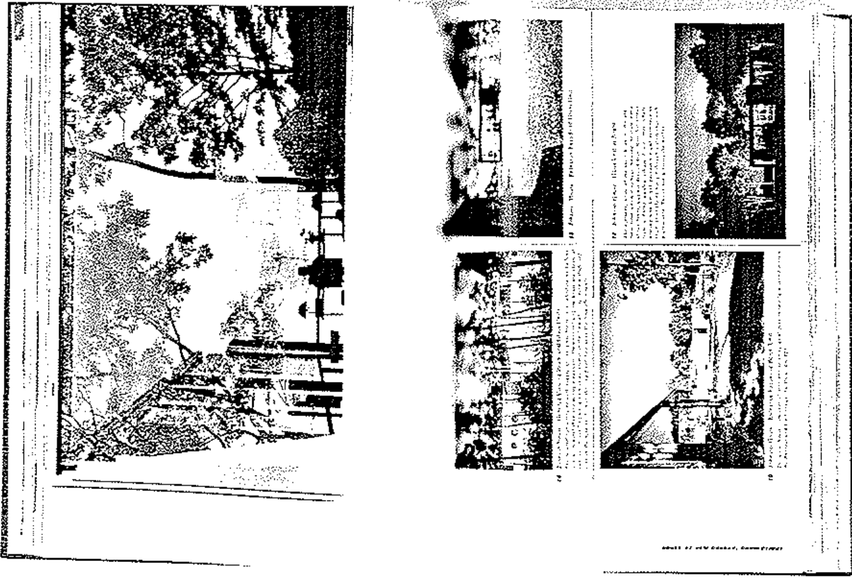
In the closing lines of his last and best-known book, *Architecture in the Age of Reason*, published posthumously in 1955, Kaufmann returned to this issue, underscoring its continued significance for him:

> No set of forms nor any definite, all-embracing formula, but the challenge to struggle for new forms and new patterns was the legacy of the Age of Reason. From the moment when a new ideal of configuration arose—a moment which of course can hardly be fixed in time—the battle for its realization began. There was no chance for it ever to attain perfect fulfillment. Yet from it sprang endless tentative solutions, such as at all times have made, and always will make, the life and the history of Architecture.[38]

Like Giedion, Kaufmann's writings were generally well received among historians, although he too was consistently criticized for distorting the past for the



(4)
Spread from Philip Johnson's "House at New Canaan, Connecticut," showing sources for the house along with details and drawings (*Architectural Review*, September 1950)



(5)
Spread from Philip Johnson's "House at New Canaan, Connecticut," with views of the house (*Architectural Review*, September 1950)

sake of his programmatic conception of present tendencies. Where more recently, Hubert Damisch and Monique Moser have interpreted Kaufmann's 1933 book as an almost heroic defense of modern architecture on the eve of its eclipse by fascism[39] marked by the closing of the Bauhaus in Berlin, the construction of Hitler's Haus der deutschen Kunst (House of German Art) by Paul Troost in Munich, and the ascendancy of fascism in Austria—among earlier historians only Peter Collins acknowledged Kaufmann's "invaluable service to contemporary architecture" for showing how "we may appreciate our own problems more acutely by seeing them in an eighteenth-century setting."[40] Others considered his case for Ledoux as a prophet of modernism "not very successful"[41] and "difficult to swallow but not difficult to digest,"[42] or claimed that "the really prophetic works" had been created instead by industrialization[43] and that Kaufmann's preoccupation with modern architecture blinded him to Ledoux's neoclassicism[44] and historicity. Kaufmann's preoccupation with revolution was called "ideological,"[45] "distorting," and "Marxist,"[46] his "metaphysics" a dangerous and "unclear theoretical basis." Like Giedion, Kaufmann was admired for his "rich factual research," but rebuked, even by his most sympathetic readers, for failing to account for the concrete historical relationships that operated between architecture and the social and political conditions of the time. Only Paul Zucker commended Kaufmann as being in "the best tradition of thorough European scholarship."[47] Even Meyer Shapiro, who in 1936 introduced Kaufmann's work in America with praise, also observed—with considerable insight, I might add—that Kaufmann's categorical distinction between autonomy and heteronomy was too metaphorical, inadequate to the historical evidence, and presumed that architecture could have such a thing as "a nature" and conform to such things as pure "laws of art," assumptions that ignored the historical contingency of disciplinary self-definitions.[48]

Among architects of the period that concerns this conference, the one notable reception of Kaufmann was by Philip Johnson. As Franz Schulze's biography of Johnson has recounted, the American Society of Architectural Historians convened at Johnson's newly completed Miesian house in Cambridge at around the time of its conference at Harvard in 1942 specifically to hear Kaufmann discuss his untranslated book of 1933, hoping that he would shed light on the work of Le Corbusier. Later, in presenting the sources and thinking behind his well-known Glass House in New Canaan of 1949 (4-5), Johnson used a plate from Kaufmann's book, depicting Ledoux's spherical Shelter for the Rural Guards. Johnson's article in *Architectural Review*[49] offered an assemblage of images accompanied by short texts that served to position his project among elementarist works by Le Corbusier, Mies, van Doesburg, Schinkel, and Malevich. Johnson's caption

to Ledoux's sphere explained that the "cubic, 'absolute' forms" of the Glass House and its separation of functional units into pure mathematical shapes came directly from Ledoux, whom he called "the Eighteenth Century father of modern architecture," one of "those intellectual revolutionaries from the baroque" from whom "we" are descended.

While interpretations of the house (beginning with Johnson's own) have tended to focus on its debt to Mies's Farnsworth House of 1946–50, the distinctive achievement of Johnson's design may be more related to his positioning of Mies (and himself) within this elementarist field, which extended and elaborated Kaufmann's historical portrait of the new architectural system. The house itself, then, may be considered a demonstration of the compositional system or "grammar"—site planning by Le Corbusier and Mies considered in relation to van Doesburg's composition of sliding rectangles and Choisy's analysis of the approach to the Acropolis; the principle of absolute form exemplified by Ledoux as a sphere, by Mies as a rectangular glass prism floating above the landscape, and by Schinkel as a cube at the edge of a sharp bluff; and the compositional principle of combining discrete geometric elements demonstrated by Johnson in an assembly of steel sections that make an "open" Miesian corner and in a floor plan that recalls the "interesting" space generated in a suprematist painting, which Johnson considered "even today the strongest single aesthetic influence on the grammar of architecture." As Hitchcock observed in 1966:

> [Johnson] was content, then, like most architects before 1750, to accept the established structural methods of his day and, like them, to design in the style of his day, or at least of his youth, the style he had joined with me in defining twenty years before as the International Style. As he told the Harvard students, he did not, like Gropius, "believe in perpetual revolution in architecture." Said he, firmly, "I do not strive for originality," for Mies had once told him: "Philip, it is much better to be good than to be original."[50]

Yet, where Mies's projects worked to elevate or sublate modern rationality into a transcendent self-reflexive artistic construct, Johnson's house shows no evidence of such dialectics. Neither epistemological nor metaphysical (Johnson interpreted Mies's transformation of standard steel sections as the equivalent of decoration, asking if mannerism would be next), Johnson's self-declared derivativeness transformed Kaufmann's system for individuation into a repertoire of forms and relational principles, discharging all obligation to struggle for transparent self-knowledge in cognizance of its limits. He made Kaufmann's endgame of autonomous reason into a language game, whose rules were reductive and stringent but free of universalizing necessity and whose aims returned to the worldliness of a social discourse of pleasure. In reaffirming, or at least making explicit, the culture of taste, style, and imitation that had after all continued into the "new" times, even within modernism, Johnson's house points to an unresolved problem in Giedion's as well as in Kaufmann's writings, one that they inherited from the impossible quest of German rationalist modernism in the 1920s to leave behind what it took to be the inadequate laws of social conventions.

* * *

Reiterating a topos from the eighteenth century, rationalists such as Mies, Ludwig Hilberseimer, Gropius, Adolf Behne, and Max Taut rejected not only old conventions and styles but conventionality and style per se—in favor of a utopian striving for a natural lawfulness of construction, designated most often by the notion of *Gestaltung* or form-creation, and later by Giedion's "space-time" and Kaufmann's "autonomy." Among architects, Mies's statements of 1923 against style and formalism, which accompanied his elemental projects in concrete, are perhaps the most well-known examples—"Any aesthetic speculation, any doctrine and any formalism we reject."[51] And "Form is not the goal but the result of our work. . . . Nor do we strive for a style. . . . We have other worries."[52] To avoid the codification and regulation associated with the idea of style, Giedion and Kaufmann, like the architects with whom they aligned themselves, posited the exigency of a higher law that would serve as a regulative ideal for a system of freedom. This, however, harbored the paradox that a regulative ideal cannot, by definition, exist or be known, cannot have properties, and so cannot actually serve as a criterion against which to judge conformance to law. Consequently, characteristics had to be projected from examples already at hand, thereby collapsing claims for natural lawfulness into cultural conventions despite the intentions of architects and historians. It is no accident that these modernists found it necessary to campaign for what should have been automatic. The achievement of nature, reason, or historical necessity was, in the end, contingent on retraining and reculturation—on programs that no one was not, after all, obliged to subscribe to. It was the operation of this regulative ideal that engendered the unresolved tension in Giedion's and Kaufmann's histories between completion and incompletion, being and becoming-striving, immanence and transcendence, which for most readers appeared as a seemingly unaccountable disparity between astute accounts of emerging tendencies and perplexing philosophical and aesthetic ideals.

The quest of 1920s rationalist architecture may in turn be understood as responding to a related problematic inscribed into the history of cultural avant-gardism, seeking to resolve the opposition between freedom and system identified by Matei Calinescu as the "irresolvable contradiction between the supposedly courageous nonconformism of the avant-garde and its final submissiveness to blind, intolerant discipline"—the *aporia* of an avant-garde wanting to be free and yet demanding regulation. In his *Five Face of Modernity*,[53] Calinescu recounted that the term "avant-garde" was first introduced in military discourse during the Middle Ages to refer to an advance guard. It was given its first figurative meaning in the Renaissance, but only became a metaphor for a self-consciously advanced position in politics, literature, and art during the nineteenth century. Political overtones accrued in the aftermath of the French Revolution and were transposed to literary-artistic circles by romantic theorists, notably Saint-Simonian social reformers who promoted the artist as the "man of imagination" capable of both foreseeing the future and creating it, as the messianic vanguard in the moral history of humankind. In the 1860s, Charles Baudelaire was the first to point out that this notion of the avant-garde harbored a tension between radical artistic freedom and programmatic political campaigns modeled on war, between critique, negation, and destruction, on

the one hand, and dogma, affirmation, and construction, on the other—in short, between freedom and system. This tension gave rise to numerous artistic responses—those that emphasized one side at the expense of the other (Seymour Howard, the student at Harvard, clearly sided with affirmation and regulation); those that attempted to resolve the tension, as Giedion did with his dynamic model; and even those that accepted it as irresolvable, as Kaufmann did at least in part.

Not only did Giedion and Kaufmann operate within the structure of this problematic, but their strategies for resolving its constitutive claims originate in the same historical and theoretical context from which cultural avant-gardism emerged—as Calinescu observed, in romanticism, but also in speculative idealism, both of which were launched by Kant's "opening up of an abyss where a bridge should have been." As Philippe Lacoue-Labarthe and Jean-Luc Nancy have explained, Kant's division between the phenomenal and the noumenal, the "is" and the "ought," differed from the traditional division between the sensible and the intelligible as "a division between forms (*a priori*) of the sensible or intuitive itself" refusing claims to knowledge that belonged properly to a transcendent authority.[54] The effect of this was to empty the subject of substance, reducing it to a pure form that was "nothing more than a function of unity or synthesis." Because for him, the subject could only be defined negatively, as a subject that is not the subject of knowledge, Kant promoted the moral subject—the "as if"—as the ethical condition for the future "necessary to preserve practical judgment from being a mere appeal to conventions." For Kant, transcendental imagination (*Einbildungskraft*) became the function required to form this unity and to do so as representation or picture, as phenomenon. Even if the moral subject, free and self-conscious, could be posited, there could be no cognition of it.[55]

The crisis inaugurated by Kant's questioning of the subject preoccupied his successors, not only in philosophy but also in art. It launched the efforts of philosophical idealism to reconquer the possibility of effective speculation through the exigency of a desire or "will to system" through which the subject would be able to recognize the Ideal in its own form. The System to which idealism aspired, or more precisely the System-Subject, was understood as a task to be done; it did not and could not yet exist, but remained "the last work of humanity." Kant also opened the way for romanticism to address this philosophical aspiration to unity through art, rather than through theory. More precisely, the romantics pursued it through poetics, or more precisely still *poiesie* or generative production, which aimed to operationalize the System through acts of individuation that strive to be absolutely self-positing, that aspire to the Work-Subject. For romanticism, the work in question was not so much an object but that which works, not so much the organon as that which organizes. It was thought to conjoin the critical dissolution of existing systems with the relentless energy of formation, positing the exigency of a total closure that could never be perfected. By thematizing that which works in the individual as the capacity to produce itself by means of its internal formative force, romanticism set up a dialectical unity between artificial and natural production, for the organic is essentially autoformation, or the genuine form of the subject.[56] The operative criterion for this form (the mark of nature) was the perfection of character, which was announced through the exigency of a "physical" knowledge of "the nature of the soul," for which the science of physiognomy was to serve as objective critic and judge.[57]

Where the idealist philosopher Friedrich Schelling grappled for forty years with the problem of grounding an ungroundable system, the romantic writer Friedrich Schlegel attempted to achieve a new unity through the writing and assembly of fragments and ideas. As a reader of both Schelling and Schlegel,[58] Giedion devised his distinctive theory of history as operationalizing the production of a new system of freedom, which he called "space-time." Like the romantic fragment or Idea, Giedion took works of art and architecture as working toward the realization of the future system and at the same time already incorporating it. Kaufmann's case for autonomy, first as individuated form and then as a system of individuation, was also located in the shadow of Kant's refusal, and while more neo-Kantian than Giedion, was, as I have argued, not untouched by constitutive claims to the absolute.[59]

Parenthetically, let me note that the tendency to collapse Kant's critical path into a formal language for modern architecture had already emerged within art history and criticism in Germany prior to the First World War, when Kant's unrepresentable *Ding-an-sich* began to be invoked in interpretations of abstract geometric forms whose individuated *Sachlichkeit*, objectivity, simplicity, and primitiveness were taken as visible signs of inner lawfulness. Where critical interpretations of the "new Renaissance" of Peter Behrens after 1904, as well as art historical treatments of the neoclassicism of *um 1800*, emphasized the individuation, purity, and primitiveness of linear, geometric forms—forms for themselves—they did not invoke the Kantian thing-in-itself directly. However, in 1907 Wilhelm Worringer schematized the psychology of form as an opposition between urges for abstraction and empathy, characterizing the former by means of "an audacious comparison" between the primitive and the "thing-in-itself," claiming that after thousands of years of evolution the feeling for the "thing-in-itself" had been reawakened, no longer as instinct but now as "the ultimate product of cognition,"[60] manifest in cubic and crystalline forms. By 1911, Worringer had applied these terms in defending the "*sachlich* self-conscious" young art of Paris (inaugurated by Cézanne, van Gogh, and Matisse).[61] In 1913 similar terms were used by the Czech cubist Vlatislav Hofman in a programmatic statement for a new "revolutionary" cubist architecture of "autonomous" forms,[62] and the following year Adolf Behne described the *ur*-forms and *ur*-elements of Bruno Taut's Monument of Iron (sphere, pyramid, undecorated surface) as a rigorous *Sachlichkeit* that freed architecture from the dictates of convention and use.[63] All three articles appeared in the expressionist journal *Der Sturm*. In the late 1920s, such a Kantian "formalism" may be discerned in Ludwig Hilberseimer's programmatic call for a metropolitan architecture "formed exclusively from itself . . . cubes and spheres, pyramids and cylinders . . . geometric and cubistic elements that do not permit of any further objectification."[64] Later, in the early 1960s, having become a reader of Kaufmann, Hilberseimer even described the main body of modern architecture with the term "Autonomous Architecture."[65]

Without thematizing the constitutive dependence of his conception of autonomy on the exclusion of heteronomy and nature, without acknowledging the extent to which his conception of architectural autonomy

depended on models from outside architecture—from philosophy, political theory, and mathematics—and without thematizing the reliance of his tentative materializations of autonomy on formal tropes, Kaufmann was unable to install a sufficiently experimental dynamic into his system to avoid its collapse into mechanism. Similarly, he did not recognize, let alone negotiate, the contradiction between the theory of physiognomic expression (common to both expressionism and functionalism) and the a priori formalism of elemental geometry. Nor did he observe, as Robin Evans recently did, that geometry is not a dead science and that architecture's reliance on it and its reciprocal internalization of architecture has produced a rich and unfinished history of disciplinary self-definition and redefinition through interdisciplinary liaisons.[66]

The failures of Giedion and Kaufmann's histories were symptomatic, then, of the modernist quest for a new normativity that would overturn Kant without returning directly to metaphysical claims to substance. While these failures would in retrospect have to be considered justified, I do not mean to suggest that this problematic be condemned or abandoned. For these avant-garde historians did, after all, leave a significant legacy. They mapped the regulatory matrix of architectural production and reception in the modern period more thoroughly and precisely than anyone had before; they scrutinized its internal contradictions, confused mixtures, and problematic transumption of the past into the system of modern production; and they struggled for an ethical relationship between self and other within it. The irresolutions in their writings are only failures if we accept the modernist assumption that resolution is the aim. Without this, their projects may be read in other ways, and their unresolved negotiation between immanent and transcendent claims for the constitution of freedom may take on new value.

* * *

To close, let me offer a possible point of departure for such a reading. In contemporary critical legal studies, Drucilla Cornell (among others) has argued that Kant's division between the "is" and the "ought" needs to be maintained—not, however, as two divided realms that serve simply to stabilize the traditional dichotomy between nature and freedom—but as an unsurpassable paradox—in law, as the irresolvable tension between law considered as a system of norms (the legal system) and justice considered as the pursuit of an ethical relationship with alterity, which necessarily defers to the beyond of code and precedent.[67] Cornell insists that justice is in fact only possible *within* the *aporia* of being both regulated and without regulation. Not only can this aporia not be resolved, efforts to do so, she argues, necessarily lead to false claims for what amount to "the system's own attempts at 'deparadoxicalization.'"[68] The transcendence of justice cannot be made the immanent end of the internal evolution of any legal system. Yet working within the system of law in the pursuit of justice, that is, deconstructively at its limits, can, she suggests, lead performatively to the transformation of the system in the direction of greater freedom.

Reading Giedion and Kaufmann from the perspective of poststructural theories of mediation would, however, require that they be treated as both targets of critique and precursors—which is admittedly risky and would require confronting the model of history that underpins them. Sixty years before Giedion and Kaufmann came to America, Friedrich Nietzsche had already identified this risk when, in his untimely meditation "On the uses and disadvantages of history for life," he promoted what he called "critical history,"[69] whose echo (albeit distorted) may be found in Giedion and Kaufmann, as well as among other activist historian-critics of their generation—Wilhelm Worringer, Adolf Behne, and Franz Roh.[70] In order to live, Nietzsche had written, it was necessary from time to time to pass judgment on the injustices of the past, to break up and dissolve a part of it by "bringing it before the tribunal, scrupulously examining it and finally condemning it." To cope with the problem of judging one's own origins and distancing oneself from them, Nietzsche posited the idea of a "second nature," which he characterized as artistic and fictive. In the very act of critical destruction, he suggested, latent and constructive potentialities could be found that would make it possible "through a new, stern discipline [to] combat our inborn heritage and implant in ourselves a new habit . . . to give oneself, as it were *a posteriori*, a past in which one would like to originate in opposition to that in which one did originate." Invoking an image of architectural creativity later echoed in manifestos for *neues bauen* around 1919, he argued that while "historical justice is always annihilating [if] the historical drive does not also contain a drive to construct, if the purpose of destroying and clearing is not to allow a future already alive in anticipation to raise its house on the ground thus liberated, if justice alone prevails, then the instinct for creation will be enfeebled and discouraged."[71] And:

> When the past speaks it always speaks as an oracle; only if you are an architect of the future and know the present will you understand it . . . only he who constructs the future has a right to judge the past. If you look ahead and set yourself a great goal, you at the same time restrain that rank analytical impulse which makes the present into a desert and all tranquility, all peaceful growth and maturing almost impossible. Draw about yourself the fence of a great and comprehensive hope, of a hope-filled striving. Form within yourself an image to which the future shall correspond.[72]

Arguing that these two moments—critical judgment and utopian hopefulness—could be conjoined in the activity of fabricating what he called a "second nature," Nietzsche's concept of critical history made productive what Baudelaire had identified, in synchronic terms, as the *aporia* of the avant-garde by casting it into time, making it productive in history. But Nietzsche was also quick to warn that judging is fraught with dangers, including the risk of forgetting that we are the products of the "aberrations, passions and errors [of earlier generations], and indeed of their crimes."[73]

his control over photographic reproductions. His desire to exclude furniture and personal objects from the photographs of the Kaufmann House, for example, extended to the Kaufmanns themselves. In explaining why he did not want the clients in the pictures, Neutra wrote that the house was a "typical problem and typical technical solution and artistic approach" rather than "a special story that conveys just how the Kaufmanns live." Letter from Neutra to Mr. Barnard dated May 29, 1947, Neutra Archive. On Neutra's relationship with Shulman and their debates about architectural photography, see Joseph Rosa, *A Constructed View: The Architectural Photography of Julius Shulman* (New York: Rizzoli, 1994), 42–54.

43 From the notes to a lecture Neutra gave to the Women's University Club on May 4, 1940, in the Neutra Archive.

44 Neutra's reliance on fantasy and other psychological material to fill in missing details and to personalize architecture found its most effective expression and restaging through photography. Here the architectural and filmic screens collapse into psychic projection machines. Neutra's great success with middle-class residential clients after World War II may derive from his capacity to make viewers of photographs of his work feel that they could be at home in the image. These images are advertisements of a sort, where nothing too personal to an "other's" domestic life intrudes upon the viewers. An important study of postwar American architecture, not yet undertaken, would examine architectural photography in relation to psychological manipulation developed primarily in the arena of advertising. On advertising, see Jackson Lears, *Fables of Abundance: A Cultural History of Advertising in America* (New York: Basic Books, 1994).

45 Neutra, "Woman Makes Man Clear," typescript manuscript, Nov. 13, 1953, Neutra Archive.

46 See the rather surprising inclusion of an article by Neutra, "Human Habitation Under New Conditions," in the third revised edition of Greta Gray's *House and Home: A Manual and Textbook of Practical House Planning* (Chicago: J. B. Lippincott, 1935), 194. Neutra describes his own pre-Oedipal relation to architecture as follows: "First I had learned about it [architecture], subconsciously, as a baby, sitting with a bare bottom on a splintery parquetry floor, digging dirt out of the cracks and licking the brass hardware of my toy cupboard. These, and my playing under the grand piano as well, had been preverbal experiences, but they were so deep as to deserve a most thorough analysis." Neutra, *Life and Shape* (New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts, 1962), 48.

47 Neutra, "The Architect Faces the Client."

48 Rank was speaking in particular of Expressionism, and used its "embryonal" forms to argue that "all form goes back to the primal form of the maternal vessel, which has become to a large extent the content of art; and indeed in an idealized and sublimated way, namely as form, which makes the primal form, fallen under repression again acceptable, in that it can be represented and felt as 'beautiful.'" See Rank, *Trauma of Birth*, 160.

49 In Nelson's operating rooms in particular, one sees psychoanalytic treatment being added to the "therapeutic" interventions made by architecture as described by Foucault in *The Birth of the Clinic*. On Nelson, see *The Filter of Reason: Work of Paul Nelson*, eds. Terence Riley and Joseph Abram (New York: Rizzoli, 1990).

50 Saarinen added at this point in his discussion that putting your legs into the womb chair was "something which women seem especially to like to do. . . . The chair should also be a flattering background when someone is in it—especially the female occupant." *Eero Saarinen On His Work* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1962), 68. The chair was designed in 1946 and produced by Knoll.

51 The Rourke House, for example, except for a few unidentified images in *Time* and in Neutra's own *Life and Human Habitat*, 170–75, has not previously been published.

52 Singling out the domestic architect for the upper-middle-class client as an example of "avocational counseling," David Reisman wrote in his book, *The Lonely Crowd: A Study of the Changing American Character* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1950), 364, that "with the architects' encouragement and help, it is possible that people are becoming willing to have a house fit them. This requires that they find out who they are."

53 Donald Woods Winnicott characterizes the holding environment as "not only the actual physical holding of the infant, but also the total environmental provision prior to the concept of 'living with.' In other words, it refers to a three-dimensional or space relationship." In further analyzing maternal care during this stage of infant development, and the merger that takes place between mother and child, Winnicott argued that "the holding environment therefore has as its main function the reduction to a minimum of impingements to which the infant must react with resultant annihilation of personal being." See Winnicott, "The Theory of the Parent-Infant Relationship," *International Journal of Psycho-Analysis* 41 (1960): 585–905. Republished in Winnicott, *Maturational Processes and the Facilitating Environment: Studies in the Theory of Emotional Development* (New York: International Universities Press, 1965), 37–55. See especially 43–46.

54 The belief that this fusion is not only possible but desirable persists today both in the popular imagination and in academia. See for example University of California, Berkeley, professor Clare Cooper-Marcus, *House as a Mirror of Self: Exploring the Deeper Meaning of Home* (Berkeley: Conari Press, 1995).

55 A good example of this kind of demonization is Tom Wolfe's *From Bauhaus To Our House* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1981.) On the other hand, the identification of the many non-architectural elements that contributed to the demolition of Pruitt-Igoe, for example, suggests that this tendency may be abating. See Katherine G. Bristol, "The Pruitt-Igoe Myth," *Journal of Architectural Education* 44 (May 1991): 163–71.

System and Freedom

Sigfried Giedion, Emil Kaufmann, and the Constitution of Architectural Modernity

DETLEF MERTINS

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1 Sigfried Giedion, letter to Walter Gropius, Oct. 25, 1937 (Gropius Archive, Houghton Library, Harvard University, bMS GER208–778), trans. author.

2 For the significance of the German distinction between *Zivilisation* and *Kultur*, see Norbert Elias, *The History of Manners*, trans. Edmund Jephcott (New York: Pantheon Books, 1978).

3 See Jill E. Pearlman, "Joseph Hudnut and the Education of the Modern Architect" (Ph.D. diss., University of Chicago, 1993). See also Winfried Nerdinger, "From Bauhaus to Harvard: Walter Gropius and the Use of History," in *The History of History in American Schools of Architecture, 1865–1975*, eds. Gwendolyn Wright and Janet Parks (New York: Temple Hoyne Buell Center for the Study of American Architecture, 1990), 89–98.

4 Walter Gropius, letter to Sigfried Giedion, Dec. 23, 1937 (Gropius Archive, Houghton Library, Harvard University, bMS GER208–778), trans. author.

5 Sigfried Giedion, *Space, Time and Architecture* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1941).

6 Kenneth John Conant, review of *Space, Time and Architecture*, by Sigfried Giedion, *Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 2–3 (Fall 1941), 128–29.

7 Elizabeth Coit, review of *Space, Time, and Architecture*, by Sigfried Giedion, *Architectural Record*, Apr. 1941, 28.

8 John A. Hartell, "Wither Architect? *Space, Time and Architecture*," *ARTnews*, Nov. 15–30, 1941, 36.

9 Henry-Russell Hitchcock, review of *Space, Time and Architecture*, by Sigfried Giedion, *Parnassus*, Apr. 1941, 179–80.

10 Philip Johnson, "Architecture in 1941," *Philip Johnson Writings* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1979), 57–60. The article was not published at the time of its writing in 1942.

11 Sokratis Georgiadis has reviewed Giedion's conception of space-time extensively in relation to prior scientific, art historical, and artistic theories. See Sokratis Georgiadis, *Sigfried Giedion: An Intellectual Biography*, trans. Colin Hall (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1993), esp. 97–150. For Alexander Dorner's treatment of space-time, see Joan Ockman, "The Road Not Taken: Alexander Dorner's Way Beyond Art," in this volume.

12 Georgiadis has discussed Schmarsow's theory of *Raumgestaltung* in relation to Giedion's space-time, these two notions already being conflated, prior to Giedion, in Theo van Doesburg, *Grundbegriffe der neuen gestaltenden Kunst* (Frankfurt am Main: Oehms, 1925; reprint, Mainz: Florian Kupferberg, 1966) and László Moholy-Nagy, *Von Material zu Architektur* (Passau: Passavia, 1929; reprint, Mainz: Florian Kupferberg, 1968).

13 Giedion, *Space, Time*, 50–55, 86–89, 188–91, 204–9, 401–4, 408–16.

14 Sigfried Giedion, *Bauen in Frankreich. Bauen in Eisen. Bauen in Eisen-Beton* (Leipzig: Klinkhardt & Biermann, 1928; *Building in France. Building in Iron. Building in Ferro-Concrete*, trans. J. Duncan Berry, Santa Monica: Getty Center for the History of Art and the Humanities, 1995).

15 Turpin C. Bannister, review of *Space, Time, and Architecture*, by Sigfried Giedion, *Art Bulletin*, Mar. 1944, 134–38; Douglas Haskell, review of *Space, Time and Architecture*, by Sigfried Giedion, *Nation*, Aug. 16, 1941, 145.

16 Giedion, *Space, Time*, 6.

17 John Summerson, review of *Space, Time and Architecture*, by Sigfried Giedion, *Architectural Review*, May 1942, 126–27; Nikolaus Pevsner, review of *Space, Time and Architecture*, by Sigfried Giedion, *Burlington Magazine for Connoisseurs*, Jan.–Dec. 1943, 25–26.

18 Giedion writes, "This living from day to day, from hour to hour, with no feeling for relationships, does not merely lack dignity; it is neither natural nor human." Giedion, *Space, Time*, 7.

19 Much earlier than Giedion, Wilhelm Worringer had suggested that the urge to abstraction and the urge to empathy both entailed self-alienation, albeit from diametrically opposed directions, and that this need for self-alienation was the essence of aesthetic experience. See Wilhelm Worringer, *Abstraction and Empathy* (1907; trans. Michael Bullock, New York: International Universities Press, 1953), 24–25.

20 H. Seymour Howard Jr., review of *Space, Time and Architecture*, by Sigfried Giedion, *Task* 2 (1941): 37–38.

21 Sigfried Giedion, "To the Editors of Task," *Task* 2 (1941): 38–39.

22 Henry-Russell Hitchcock, *Painting Toward Architecture* (New York: Duell, Sloan and Pearce, 1948).

23 Le Corbusier, *New World of Space* (New York and Boston: Reynal & Hitchcock/Institute of Contemporary Art, 1948).

24 Hitchcock, *Painting*, 38–40; my emphasis.

25 Le Corbusier, *New World*, 8.

26 Emil Kaufmann, *Von Ledoux bis Le Corbusier: Ursprung und Entwicklung der Autonomen Architektur* (Vienna: Rolf Passer, 1933; reprint, Stuttgart: Gerd Hatje, 1985).

27 Kaufmann, *Von Ledoux*, 51.

28 Emil Kaufmann, "Claude-Nicolas Ledoux: Inaugurator of a New Architectural System," *Journal of the American Society of Architectural Historians* 3, no. 3 (July 1943): 12–20.

29 In his review of *Architecture in the Age of Reason*, Alfred Neumeyer questioned this absence, writing "One wonders whether the complete absence of Germany in his discussion might not also be based on bitter personal experiences." See Alfred Neumeyer, review of *Architecture in the Age of Reason*, by Emil Kaufmann, *Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 15 (Mar. 1957), 365–66.

30 Kaufmann, "Claude-Nicolas Ledoux," 19.

31 Kaufmann, "Claude-Nicolas Ledoux," 17–18.

32 Kaufmann, *Von Ledoux*, 19.

33 Kaufmann, *Von Ledoux*, 24.

34 Kaufmann, *Von Ledoux*, 17–18.

35 Kaufmann, *Von Ledoux*, 39.

36 Kaufmann, "Claude-Nicolas Ledoux," 20.

37 An alternative formulation of this idea was later put forward by Ernst Bloch when he interpreted Kaufmann's presentation of Ledoux's ideal city as a multifarious utopia of crystalline geometric order, a nonorganic and empty frame waiting to be penetrated with "stimulus, humanity, and fullness," the frame or "horizon of peace" in which "the ornament of the human tree of life is the only real content of that overall peace and clarity." See Ernst Bloch, "Building in Empty Spaces," (1959), in *The Utopian Function of*

Art and Literature: Selected Essays, trans. Jack Zipes and Frank Mecklenburg (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1988), 195–99.

38 Emil Kaufmann, *Architecture in the Age of Reason* (New York: Dover, 1955), 215.

39 See Hubert Damisch, "Ledoux avec Kant," in Emil Kaufmann, *De Ledoux à Le Corbusier. Origine et développement de l'architecture autonome* (Paris: Editions l'Equerre, 1981), 11–22; and Monique Moser, "Situation d'Emil K.," in *Origines de l'Architecture Moderne* (exhibition catalog, Arc-et-Senans: Edition Fondation C.-N. Ledoux, 1987), 84–89.

40 Peter Collins, review of *Architecture in the Age of Reason*, by Emil Kaufmann, *Royal Architectural Institute of Canada Journal* 34 (May 1957): 184–55.

41 S. Lang, review of *Three Revolutionary Architects, Boullée, Ledoux, and Lequeu*, by Emil Kaufmann, *Royal Institute of British Architects Journal* 61 (Dec. 1953): 70.

42 H. A. N. Brockman, review of *Architecture in the Age of Reason*, by Emil Kaufmann, *Royal Institute of British Architects Journal* 63 (Aug. 1956): 430.

43 Fiske Kimball, review of *Three Revolutionary Architects, Boullée, Ledoux, and Lequeu*, by Emil Kaufmann, *Art Bulletin*, Mar. 1954, 77.

44 Thomas J. McCormick Jr., review of *Three Revolutionary Architects, Boullée, Ledoux, and Lequeu*, by Emil Kaufmann, *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians* 12, 31–32.

45 Neumeyer, review of *Architecture in the Age of Reason*, 365–66.

46 Ilaria Toesca, review of *Architecture in the Age of Reason*, by Emil Kaufmann, *Burlington Magazine for Connoisseurs*, Oct. 1957, 351–52.

47 Paul Zucker, review of *Architecture in the Age of Reason*, by Emil Kaufmann, *Progressive Architecture*, Mar. 1956, 204–22.

48 Meyer Shapiro, review of *Kunstwissenschaftliche Forschungen*, by Emil Kaufmann, *Art Bulletin* 18, no. 2 (June 1936): 258–66.

49 Philip Johnson, "House at New Canaan, Connecticut," *Architectural Review*, Sept. 1950, 152–59.

50 Henry-Russell Hitchcock, introduction to *Philip Johnson Architecture 1949–1965* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1966), 10.

51 Mies van der Rohe, "Bürohaus," *G* 1 (July 1922): 3. Ludwig Mies van der Rohe, "Office Building," trans. Mark Jarzombek, in Fritz Neumeyer, *The Artless Word: Mies van der Rohe on the Building Art* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1991), 241.

52 Mies van der Rohe, "Bauen," *G* 2 (Sept. 1923): 1. Ludwig Mies van der Rohe, "Building," trans. Mark Jarzombek, in Fritz Neumeyer, *Artless Word*, 242.

53 Matei Calinescu, *Five Faces of Modernity: Modernism, Avant-Garde, Decadence, Kitsch, Postmodernism* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1987). The first edition was published as *Faces of Modernity* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1977). See "The Idea of the Avant-garde," 97–148.

54 Philippe Lacoue-Labarthe and Jean-Luc Nancy, *The Literary Absolute: The Theory of Literature in German Romanticism*, trans. Philip Barnard and Cheryl Lester (Albany: State University of New York, 1988).

55 Lacoue-Labarthe and Nancy, "Overture: The System-Subject," *Literary Absolute*, 27–37.

56 Lacoue-Labarthe and Nancy, *Literary Absolute*, 48–49.

57 Lacoue-Labarthe and Nancy, *Literary Absolute*, 112–19.

58 As a student of Heinrich Wölfflin and an admirer of the Viennese school of art history, Giedion assumed a neo-Kantian orientation toward the systemic analysis of historical periods, with idealist overtones. Sokratis Georgiadis has noted Giedion's interest in Friedrich Schelling around 1936 in his "Giedions Versuch einer äesthetischen Theorie der Moderne," in *Sigfried Giedion 1888–1968. Der Entwurf einer modernen Tradition* (exhibition catalog, Zurich: Ammann, 1989), 22–23. Yet Giedion had cited Friedrich Schlegel on the title page of his first book, *Spätbaroker und Romantischer Klassizismus* (*Late Baroque and Romantic Classicism*) of 1922: "Once there is talk of a comprehensive transformation (*Umgestaltung*), one must not forget that architecture provides the firm ground and common basis for all the other formative arts, and that the renewal must take its start from here." As this quotation announced, Giedion took architecture to be a thoroughly historical work, the putting-into-form of a comprehensive transformation through artistic production. Where this first book concerned the transformation that occurred around 1800 in its relationship to the past, Giedion spent the next twenty-five years elaborating his understanding of its implications for his own time. Offering his own resolution to the *aporia* of the avant-garde in a synthetic mixture of romanticism's generative work and idealism's auto-system—Georgiadis has pointed to the "artistic" character of Giedion's project—Giedion made the writing of history itself into a work of critically reproducing the architectonic system and, reciprocally, made architecture into an ongoing work of operationalizing the historical transformation through which the system-subject would be materialized and made available to consciousness. He described historical artifacts as indices of their time, testimony for the historian to decode and judge, and took it as his moral responsibility to distinguish between those things that were incompatible with the work ("transitory facts") and those that were compatible with the system ("constituent facts"), not the so-called systematic ordering of an ensemble, but in the romantic sense—which Lacoue-Labarthe and Nancy, paraphrasing Benjamin with Heidegger in mind, characterized as "that by which and as which an ensemble holds together and establishes itself for itself in the autonomy of the self-jointure that makes its 'sytasis' to use Heidegger's term" (*Literary Absolute*, 46). Not only does this conception of system rehearse Giedion's notion of space-time, but it also resonates with his appreciation of Jacob Burckhardt's treatment of the totality of the Renaissance by assembling fragments of its daily life "so skillfully that a picture of the whole forms in his readers' minds" (*Space, Time*, 3)

59 Neo-Kantianism was the most pervasive intellectual orientation in German-speaking countries in the decades around 1900. Quite varied, it included several distinct schools and many singular philosophical projects. See Klaus Christian Köhnke, *Entstehung und Aufstieg des Neukantianismus. Die deutsche Universitätsphilosophie zwischen Idealismus und Positivismus* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1986). See also Jürgen Oelkers, Wolfgang K. Schultz, and Heinz-Elmar Tenorth, eds., *Neukantianismus. Kulturtheorie, Pädagogik und Philosophie* (Weinheim: Deutscher Studien, 1989). In English, see Thomas E. Willey, *Back to Kant* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1978).

60 Worringer, *Abstraction and Empathy*, 18.

61 Wilhelm Worringer, "Zur Entwicklungsgeschichte der modernen Malerei," *Der Sturm* 2, no. 75 (Aug. 1911): 597–98.

62 Vlatislav Hofman, "Der Geist der Umwandlung in der bildenden Kunst," *Der Sturm* 4, no. 190–91 (Dec. 1913): 146–47. Hofman's fellow Czech cubist, Josef Capek, also published a manifesto for modern architecture in *Der Sturm*, calling for a "pure architectonic language" whose expressions would be "sublime"; see Josef Capek, "Moderne Architektur," *Der Sturm* 5, no. 3 (May 1914): 18–19.

63 Adolf Behne, "Bruno Taut," *Der Sturm* 4, no. 198–99 (Feb. 1914): 182–83.

64 Ludwig Hilberseimer, *Großstadtarchitektur* (Stuttgart: Julius Hoffmann, 1927; reprint, 1978), 100.

65 See Ludwig Hilberseimer, *Contemporary Architecture: Its Roots and Trends* (Chicago: Paul Theobald and Company, 1964), 104–31. Under the title "Autonomous Architecture," Hilberseimer assembled what he referred to as Le Corbusier's revived classicism, Russian constructivism, Dutch neoplasticism, German expressionism, and the "structural" architecture of Mies van der Rohe. "The architecture of the 'Twenties,'" he wrote, reiterating not only Kaufmann but also his own writings from that time, "was characterized by its objectivity, its directness, and its simplicity. Its trend was toward architectural autonomy. It aimed to free itself from all external influences, from all traditional bonds, to be self-determined, and to realize its goals by the true means of architecture" (104).

66 See Robin Evans, *The Projective Cast: Architecture and Its Three Geometries* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1995), xxxvi–xxxvii.

67 See Drucilla Cornell, *The Philosophy of the Limit* (New York: Routledge, 1992), especially chapter 5, "The Relevance of Time to the Relationship between the Philosophy of the Limit and Systems Theory: The Call to Judicial Responsibility," 116–54.

68 Cornell, *Philosophy of the Limit*, 133.

69 Friedrich Nietzsche, "On the Uses and Disadvantages of History for Life," 1874, in *Untimely Meditations*, trans. R. J. Hollingdale (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), 57–124, 75–76.

70 See Wilhelm Worringer, *Form Problems of the Gothic* (New York: G. E. Stechert, 1910), 18; Adolf Behne, *Zur neuen Kunst* (Berlin: Der Sturm, 1915; reprinted in *Sturm-Bücher*, Nendeln/Liechtenstein: Kraus reprint, 1974), 32; Franz Roh, *Nach-Expressionismus. Magischer Realismus. Probleme der neuesten Europäischen Malerei* (Leipzig: Klinkhardt & Biermann, 1925), 5–6; Sigfried Giedion, *Building in France*, 85.

Despite the absence of Nietzsche's radicality in Giedion's text, and despite Giedion's emphasis on developmental history and organic growth—both of which Nietzsche eschewed—the imprint of Nietzsche's historiographic invention remains legible. Giedion's self-reflections on the task of history continued to be structured in this way, as evident in the introductory section of *Space, Time and Architecture*, which he titled "History A Part of Life." Even Nietzsche's insistence on the critical judgment of history for "those who suffer and seek deliverance" finds its distorted echo in Giedion's therapeutic conception of resolving the tragic, schizophrenic experiences of the chaotic and unstable modern world through the self-consciousness proffered by history.

That the historians' participation in the formation of the present was welcomed by artists and architects is attested to by an editorial in the 1926 issue of the elementarist pan-avant-garde magazine *G*, whose circle included the architects Mies, Hilberseimer, and Hugo Häring as well as the critic Walter Benjamin, who would soon take up the project of history. Probably written by the filmmaker Hans Richter (the journal's editor), "History is what happens today" cried out against the art history of connoisseurship, taste, and psychology and urged historians to place their work into the moving forces of the epoch, arguing that "the truth of history will not be read from the 'facts,' rather it will be constructed." It continued:

> Let your manuscripts be pulped!
> Write manifestos for us!
> Live for what is objective today—
> so far as you see it.
> Learn to see it—so far as you want
> and
> Learn to want it.

See "Geschichte ist das, was Heute geschieht," *G* 5–6 (Apr. 1926): 131.

71 Nietzsche, "On the Uses and Disadvantages," 95.

72 Nietzsche, "On the Uses and Disadvantages," 94.

73 Nietzsche, "On the Uses and Disadvantages," 76.

1 Martin Steinmann observes a change in architectural publishing around 1928: "The necessity to obtain commissions not only from progressive and wealthy clients but also an increase of commissions from the state began to have an effect on the architectural theory of the modern movement about 1928. It revealed itself in the fact that pertinent statements, full of technical assertions took the place of proclamations, and that former polemical periodicals were replaced by publications as *Das Neue Frankfurt*." Martin Steinmann, "Political Standpoints in CIAM: 1928–1933," *Architectural Association Quarterly* 4 (Oct.-Dec. 1972): 49.

2 "Die Erklärung von La Sarraz," in *CIAM: Dokumente 1928–1939*, ed. Martin Steinmann (Basel: Birkhäuser, 1979), 29.

3 On the history of CIAM, see Auke van der Woud, *CIAM: Volkshuisvesting, Stedebouw/Housing, Town Planning* (Delft: Delft University Press, 1983); and Eric Mumford, "CIAM Urbanism after the Athens Charter," *Planning Perspectives* 7 (1992)

4 Hans Schmidt, *Beiträge zur Architektur, 1924–1964* (Berlin: Verlag für Bauwesen, 1965), 17: "Eine Masse, ohne den Rhythmus des organisch Befügten, in Chaos, aus den die verschiedenen Hauptgebäude sinnlos auftauchen und wieder verschwinden."

5 The air view was utilized most spectacularly at the fourth congress of 1933, which took place aboard the steamship *Patris II* as it sailed from Marseilles to Athens and back. Here orthographic representation of same-scale plans, based in large part on aerial photography, provided a universal basis for a comparison of thirty-three different world cities.

6 M. Christine Boyer, "Mobility and Modernism in the Postwar City," *CENTER* 5 (1989): 88.