

the  
way  
beyond  
'art'

#### **IV CONCLUSION**

We have followed here the development of Western concepts to demonstrate the forces that drive forward our visual production; forces that evidently lead away from what we are used to call "art." The "art work" as symbol of life's unchangeable core and as propagator of a belief in a static world has run its course. It has tested its efficacy in a struggle with the forces of the surrounding world, and in so doing has been constantly forced to change its nature. Today this transformation has reached a stage where a work can no longer be designated by the fixed term, "art."

We have begun this study with a close investigation of evolution, beginning with prehistoric times, for we believe that the forces active in modern art cannot be judged by the timeless standards of that three-dimensional reality which gave birth to "art." As long as we ignore the fact that the "art work" and the concept of reality it expressed were only passing historical solutions of a much profounder problem, we shall be unable to understand the scope of the revolution through which we are passing. Not only in visual production but in other fields, too, we shall violate the forces of life's growth and risk catastrophes such as the most recent one which has placed humanity close to the edge of an abyss. That abyss we are still trying to bridge.

The red danger signal of absolutistic thought is still up, because we are still unwilling to heed the lesson of history which teaches us that all attempts to build life on a static basis have failed and that they have been of only a temporary evolutionary significance. Those attempts must be taken for what they are: the product of certain experiences which the magical mind underwent. The experience of the world's vast changeability forced that mind to transform itself into a new species of mind which was better equipped to deal with the forces of life. It became a rational mind which developed an X-raylike capacity for seeing things "intellectually." It saw unchangeable ideas behind the chaotic and wearing interplay and counterplay of sensuously daemonic things. It explained that diversity as a surface phenomenon governed by absolute master ideas. This rational thinking was doubtless more effective than the magical type had been. Three-dimensional reality and the belief in the fundamental identity of all visible objects afforded a greater freedom and security. Its deeper magic — that of changeless ideas which gave birth to the cult of "beauty" and "art" — brought a better working order and unity into human life. Yet what entitles us to see in this improvement an ultimate solution? What entitles us to see in life such a narrow and short-term evo-

lution? The very drive toward the erection of three-dimensional reality could never maintain itself in strict absoluteness. It worked only by constantly changing its identity under the pressure of experience and the transforming energies active in that experience. The principle of a rational universe — the antagonism between spiritual form and the powers of sensory change — was still too primitive and too close to magical thinking. The mind which lived in such a reality and which had to play its role as an energy among other energies was forced in this struggle to devise always more inclusive concepts of the one central Absolute. This effort led to an attempted suppression of the transforming powers of life, until finally three-dimensional reality exploded into a less rigid, a deeper and more dynamic world concept. The powers of evolution themselves led to a deeper and more energetic unity of life and abandoned the fixed basis of three-dimensional reality. They developed eyes which saw more penetratingly than the X-ray eyes of three-dimensional vision. It became clear that no absolute concept was able to account for the creative transforming power of life. All fixity and codification appeared to be "premature" and an insult to life's creativeness. God grew gradually from an eternally identical spiritual Being into a never identical power of change. This transforming power we have seen active also in modern design: Enlightenment and Romanticism had paved the way for it.

In this modern evolution, artistic creation and esthetic experience have changed their character so radically that a search for new terms has become imperative. Abstract painting and the new architecture are no longer trying to confirm an identical basic condition but to create a spontaneous energy which may change that identity. All "form" belongs to a three-dimensional, solid world with a fixed extension. This is exactly what the modern vision is trying to overcome. It pushes ahead into a world of pure energism. So the words "art" and "artist" have come to sound stale; they create associations of eternal receptacles of "truth," of ultimacy and self-sufficiency, i.e. of something that stands still in an immutable life context. The modern designer wishes to work much more intensely. His product must be useful. The building and the painting must once more act and function as the magical image did, only on a much deeper level, for THAT POWER OF SPONTANEOUS CHANGE WHICH HAD ONCE BEEN A SOURCE OF ANGUISH IS TODAY A SOURCE OF HOPE. We expect it to free us from the rigid supremacy of a fixed principle. Modern design must itself take part, as a higher energy, in the life process which has abandoned the old, supposedly eternal laws. This means that modern design has become both a product and a producer of our modern reality.

We have pointed out how similar this evolution of visual production

has been to the evolution of modern physics, and how observation has led both to the concept of an overwhelmingly dynamic universe. Here, too, we can see that the forces of life are much too explosive to be forced into the cage of "space" or to be defined as a movement of identical solid particles which are actuated by an always identical power. Those hypothetical ultimate units which had composed "space" now explode in the Beyond. They blast the whole space world and overrule all its fixed relations and rules. They draw on a substratum world which remains never the same, since it consists of the ceaseless interaction of energies. No other concept of nature can account for the phenomenon of atomic energy. How could we ever hope to relate the latter to a nature which "conserves" energy and matter in a space-bounded stasis? \* What modern physics and modern visual production have in common is the spontaneous power of autonomous change which has superseded the old identity concept. Yet neither movement can be isolated from the rest of life. Each is shot through with new experiences gained in different fields. Who would now dare to separate physics from biology, psychology, philosophy, sociology, economics and politics? And how could architecture and designing keep alive if they were divorced from all these fields. In order to understand fully the forces at work in the present transformation of visual production we must cast a glance at the other fields of modern endeavor.

BIOLOGY would find it harder than physics to maintain the belief that all changes derive from the blind working of a mechanical force whose rules are eternal. The assumption of the Enlightenment, first made by Lamarck, that there also exists the metaphysical idea of a perfect form as a directive magnetic force, failed to furnish a satisfactory answer. The integration of this paralyzing contradiction was started by Darwin, who gave the transforming energy a new depth and thus raised it to something more than mere mechanical function. To him life was too creative to be explained in terms of blind redistribution of inert matter. His "living atom" already prefigures a volitional power of spontaneous change such as modern biology assumes behind all forms of life. Biology, too, arrived at the concept of an open irreversible growth which draws its strength from a substratum so teeming with energies that it can never remain identical. † Here, too, inert nature has come alive in a dynamic

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\* If — as Hahn says — the chief problem in gaining atomic power was to recreate by the very act of fission the energy that caused the fission of nuclei, then the classical law of a balanced exchange (movement in space) between cause and effect is no longer valid. We obviously no longer "preserve" an identical amount of world-energy, but break into a new inexhaustible substratum of force that explodes the static, identical foundation of traditional reality.

† This writer has had an opportunity to experience this new concept of reality by sen-

sense; here, too, the three-dimensional formal concept of the species has proved to be too narrow and superficial. The value of the individual now lies in something deeper than his ultimate self-sufficiency. It lies in his power to improve his alleged identity by taking part in the self-changing life process. Here, too, as in physics, something that had seemed identical to three-dimensional vision is now seen to be engaged in a constant transformation of its basic elements. Three-dimensional vision had regarded the genesis of a new species as an act that was inexplicable in its suddenness. But that act is no longer baffling to a mind thinking in terms of pure, extraspatial energies. To a biology thinking in such terms the wound of three-dimensional spirit-body polarity is no longer open: it has been covered with the new tissue of pure energism. Modern medicine has followed a very similar road.

In *PSYCHOLOGY* Freud has closed the gap (cf. p. 98). Both concepts of the soul, the old concept of total supremacy of form-idea over the boundlessness of sensual impulses, and the split concept of Enlightenment in which identical conscious form-powers always struggled with the flux of changing sense-impressions — both these concepts have been superseded by the deeper unity of an unceasing interplay of energies. The process of rational thinking arises from the interaction of subconscious drives and the forces of the milieu. So the individual abandons his supposedly timeless static basis and becomes part of an open process of growth which unifies life in a much purer dynamism. Here, too, the three-dimensional vision appears as a transitional phase between the primitive vision of vague "forces" and our own deeper and sharper vision.

In almost all its discoveries psychology is linked with modern philosophy, whose most vital expression we find in *AMERICAN PRAGMATISM*. There the same integration in logical thought, moral volition and esthetic experience takes place on a deeper, i.e. more dynamic level. Acting and being acted upon change the ultimate identity of the old basic mental elements and make them over into self-changing energies. "Growth

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sory means. The occasion was a demonstration of microphotographic fast-motion pictures on the growth of the fish egg, made and interpreted by Dr. Edward C. Roosen-Runge (now of Louisville University). There it became evident that a transformed time, i.e. an acceleration or retardation of the photographic process, created a completely different spatial reality. Moreover, it was brought home to the spectator that these wholly unstable visual processes of growth — interconnected by tensions only — were but faint and crude surface reflexes of purely energetic transformation processes whose tremendous intensity could never be accommodated in the four-dimensional cage. One was forced to realize that the concepts of FORM and Space including Time-Space are much too close to the sensory surface ever to be able to describe life's profound transformative energies. The sensory experience of these movies shows indeed such affinity to the vision of modern design that this writer makes their demonstration part of his courses on modern art.

itself becomes the only moral end" (John Dewey).\*

ECONOMIC THINKING, too, has been forced by experience to relinquish the semi-absolutism of the autonomy of the free individual. For that autonomy has not resulted — contrary to expectations — in a self-regulation based upon an absolute law which would conserve firmly the redistribution of identical units of extended matter (symbolized in the gold standard). It has led, rather, to a chaos of mutual exploitation on the part of autonomous individuals (monopolies and the nations which represent them). That chaos has constantly threatened — and still is threatening — to relapse into the absolutism of total government and imperialism. So there has developed within capitalism a new and more efficient species of mind to replace the old autonomous "I," and that new species sees deeper and plans farther ahead. The final ground is no longer the autonomous individual but an interpenetrative collaboration of all individuals to dissolve autonomy. The eternal law of demand and supply itself can be changed by creating new demands. Gold currency is no longer a static unit with the character of ultimacy; currency becomes dependent upon the mutual stimulation of national productions. It becomes a by-product of the open process of economic growth. This process itself, i.e. the very act of productive transformation, is now the never-identical foundation which supports life. Already, with Henry Ford, we could see this thrust into a new economic reality. This new reality became a world problem in Bretton Woods. Its new full-employment philosophy tends toward a complete flexibility of exchange rates in order to increase production and decrease its cost. It obviously drives toward the mutual penetration of national economies in order to stimulate the energies of production toward creative improvement (more and cheaper goods). Keynes' vision of economy is no longer interested in the preservation of a balance between import and export but rather in keeping that static foundation on the move. Here also we have clearly the new vision of a self-changing reality, a new thinking in energetic processes.

The powers which Enlightenment introduced into the economic process were still hampered by absolutistic notions embodied in the autonomy of the "free individual." Our big problem in economics and politics is to do away with those fetters so that national and world economy may work together without running the risk of being strangled by a total government or a chaotic oligarchy. The Tennessee Valley Au-

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\* The possibilities of Pragmatism have not begun to be exploited. To identify the first steps in progressive education with the *summa* of this philosophy is no less a misunderstanding than to identify the errors in the use of atomic power with the possibilities opened by the tapping of subatomic energy.

thority and, on an international basis, the international Danube power project and the idea of a true internationalization of the Ruhr Basin are the first examples of an economic and political philosophy which thinks literally in "supraspatial" terms. Atomic energy has dissolved the absolute character of solid matter, of the *Lebensraum* of raw materials and of borders. If we make use of the substratum of energies a small space may become a large space, in the same way that we have made absolute extension relative by means of rapid communication. It seems that in WORLD POLITICS, too, a thrust into supraspatial autonomous change is required for the establishment of the new unity among men.

So long as we continue to see in races, nations or states eternal styles which never change and so possess a divine autonomy and self-sufficiency, so long will we continue to impede any political unification on a world-wide scale. For then we run counter to the forces of life. Only when the political individual begins to think beyond himself and regards himself as an energetic process striving to improve himself through interaction with other energies — only then can that unification be achieved. Peace cannot last unless we learn politically that we are not here to confirm or conserve our individuality and our special interests but to transform individuality and interests through a mutual give and take. NOBODY CAN FLOURISH UNLESS HE KEEPS ON EVOLVING IN HIS VERY ESSENCE. PEACE IS NO STATIC CONDITION.

The terms which we have used in this brief summary of modern movements besides visual production prove how inseparable all these disciplines are. Modern planning and modern architecture are inseparable from a philosophy of real estate which has overcome the semi-absolutism of free enterprise, and Modern Realism and its tendency toward a life-improving language of symbols are integral parts of the modern community, of modern economy and modern world politics.

Yet in every field this evolution depends on the boldness of a few people. The overwhelming majority of men follow more or less obsolete concepts. It is true that magical thinking survives only in dying rites and superstitions; yet three-dimensional thinking, especially in the form of medieval or Baroque total absolutism, is still tremendously strong. Even stronger is the semi-absolutism of the "free personality" who does not think beyond himself because he still regards himself as a vessel of ultimate truths and values and hence as an end in himself. We have learned that neither an absolute transcendental idea nor a reliance on always identical divine faculties of the human individual is able to unite mankind.

Where, then, lies our hope? Only in individuals who think beyond



themselves, who feel alive with energies that press toward mutual penetration and so toward common growth. Then only will the individual feel responsible, in a deeper and more energetic sense, for the whole community of men. And this new unification must be achieved not only by a few pioneers, like the modern designers, but by everybody. The individual counts only as a lifelong process of transformation. The moral strength which is now needed must be drawn from the evolutionary thought embodied in the modern sciences, philosophy and visual production. This is the only way to reach a flexible, growing unity. And since no other experience is more impressive than the visual experience, the moment has come for ESTHETICS, ART HISTORY and ART MUSEUMS to develop into the ethical teachers of modern man and to help him outgrow his semistatic philosophy.

As regards ESTHETICS, we have already shown that it has run its course as form experience. It is as impossible to posit a general objective standard of beauty as it is to assume an invariable esthetic need and feeling for QUALITY, expressed in endlessly various but nevertheless essentially equivalent styles.

This QUALITY is said to reside in a timeless will of all artists to create inner static balance. But there evidently was no such will in magical production. The prehistoric image, which gave the maximum of satisfaction when mutilated, cannot possibly have been experienced as *Gestalt*, nor can we today experience it as such. The concept of QUALITY really applies only to the three-dimensional, i.e. statically anchored, production and not to anything either before or after. The wish to conserve throughout the whole historical evolution, including our own changing epoch, one always identical esthetic faculty becomes more and more absurd. (It actually extends the belief in an Adam.) The magical experience which aimed at practical sensory change, the esthetic experience of beauty which meant conserving an ideal basic condition, and modern experience which drives toward a practical function of growth, i.e. toward an ever-open transformation, are all different in their ultimate essence. If the eternal esthetic faculty is not to evaporate into meaningless mist, then it, too, must be energized. In esthetics, too, the continuation of the three-dimensional drive toward the distinctness of an identical basic idea leads to absurdity since it is stripping that idea of its last vestige of distinctness.

Dewey has described the esthetic experience as an open process of "doing and undergoing," as a struggle between the energies of the ego and those of the milieu, which are represented by tradition, different "egos," etc. This step indicates a considerable advance and invites still

another step, i.e. an inquiry into the question whether this "give and take" process remains the same for all individuals and in regard to all objects. We doubt that it does. Dewey's analysis may be compared with an Abstract composition that shows autonomous change *per se*. But Abstract art already contains the driving force to spread out into actual historical processes, and thus to tear down the relics of the walls of self-sufficient form. Describing a timeless dynamic principle of esthetic experience cannot reveal the real intensity of life forces. They only show up in actual evolution. The esthetic experience is self-changing in a sense much wider than the purely formal sense. A modern mind which experiences life as an open process is differently impressed by Herbert Bayer's "Mountains" and by a Renaissance painting or an Egyptian relief. Yet that relatively goes farther yet, for a mind still close to the Baroque may again experience these three productions in wholly different ways. There is no static or semistatic platform where all spectators and all historical works of art may meet. It is inevitable that the modern mind finds in a modern composition a greater — and essentially different — satisfaction than the satisfaction he might derive from historical paintings which represent earlier evolutionary stages of reality, i.e. stages which this mind has outgrown. There can be no doubt that we include, whether consciously or unconsciously, the fact of man's mental growth in our judgment of esthetic value. As soon as we learn, for instance, that a Vermeer which we had greatly admired has turned out to be a recent product, or that a certain "Gothic" structure was really built during the Historic Revival, our esthetic pleasure and admiration come to a sudden end. Even esthetically there seems to be no "art without epoch." To experience an historical art work without taking into account the irreversibility of Time and the energetic transformative processes that represent it becomes more and more a life-resisting act. The experience of past art has no real meaning unless it is a struggle between our own energies and those of the historical art work. There is no art *per se*, and no aesthetics *per se*, only mutual transformations of works of art and observers.

We are now outgrowing the experience of timeless form, i.e. esthetics proper. Less and less do we experience an always identical basic world condition. Like pre-esthetic magical man we begin to respond to transforming energies in life and visual production. Usefulness, efficiency, active energy to transform life — all these are returning today in a deeper and more intensive form,\* and their return spells the death of the esthetic

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\* The imitative act of magical man intervened much more superficially in the life process than do modern design, the theoretical and practical sciences, etc.

experience, which was, by definition, opposed to usefulness. It is plainly impossible to reconcile a belief in the basic changeability of the world with esthetics.\* Yet by changing into a historical science endowed with a new self-changing dynamism, traditional esthetics may gain enormous power. Should it succeed in making people see, not only in modern design but also in historical visual productions, the never-identical collaboration of creative energies, then it would also impress on everybody the fact that it is the very act of transformation which brings about unity. This is the only sound basis upon which to build the future of mankind esthetically.

Like Esthetics so ART HISTORY will emerge with new powers from this abandonment of all timeless notions. When art history became a history of styles it began to explain historical changes in terms of a semi-absolute philosophy, founded on the supposedly timeless faculties of the human subject. These subjective faculties were substituted for the old invariably true, objective form-idea,† and were said to create always new — and yet eternally valid — style forms through their contact with diverse sensory experiences. We may also say of the history of styles that it lived in a four-dimensional reality, i.e. in a world that was mobile but still too narrow — a world paralyzed by its split character. What paralyzed it was the continued insistence on eternal basic elements in an eternal human esthetic consciousness, whether these basic elements were called the concept of space or of the picture plane, the eternal essence of Impressionism, *Gestalt*, eternal types, etc. All these concepts were, so to speak, still maintained as spatial forms which now started to curve under the impact of transforming energies. They were, so to speak, ultimate quanta of radiating matter, which served to construct the floating interpenetrating continuum of the art-historic universe. They constituted the unifying and conserving element in that universe. But as in the natural sciences here, too, such a concept of life proved too narrow. Those last semi-static units called "types" explode under the pressure of the transforming energies of history. Types come and go in the growing process of evolution; they are never conserved.

Let us take as an example that general "type," SPACE. How could we possibly conserve that concept throughout the course of history? We are already stretching it considerably by saying that the three-dimensional-

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\* It becomes more and more impossible to judge modern designs by "grace," "proportions" and similar standards of a form-anchored world. Here, too, we must see more sharply.

† In its pre-style stage, art history still tried to separate spatial qualities from temporal ones, and made the first the ruler; style-history admitted time as co-ruler.

ity of antiquity and medievalism — though it was not yet space in the Renaissance sense — was a forerunner of our space notion. But that stretching becomes wholly absurd when we attribute to the Egyptians and the prehistoric peoples an eternal concept of the picture plane and proceed to detect in that concept the germ of our own space notion. And how can we possibly reconcile an eternal category of space with the evolution of the last two hundred years, not to speak of the millions of years yet to come?

It is the same with any other supposedly eternal category of the human mind. It becomes clear again and again that none of them can keep its identity under the pressure of the transforming powers. They all explode into the greater depth of an energy which loses its own identity through interaction with other energies produced by experience. What is happening in art history is an evolution quite similar to the evolutions in physics, biology, psychology and pragmatist philosophy.\* The ultimate units, i.e. the identical or semi-identical points which had built the space world and the time-space world are dissolving into purely energetic processes of autonomous change. Here, too, we are brought face to face with a world comparable to that of Dirac's substratum.

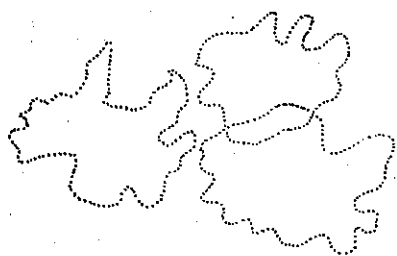
The history of styles developed because the historical powers of transformation had proved too strong to be any longer accommodated in the rigid three-dimensional cage of an ideal space form. Now these powers have proved too strong even for the semirigid four-dimensional cage of the history of styles. So we must dare to thrust forward into a more flexible, purely dynamic unity. To traditional minds this unity may no longer appear continuous yet it is the only way out of the prison of a statically anchored reality. The new continuity is more flexible, spiritual and energetic, and by the same token it is more reassuring and closer to observable change than the old rigid continuity which had been based upon the supremacy of a static Being over Becoming, i.e. upon antagonism. The notion that there is a stronger underlying changeability which causes all surface change results in a much sounder unity. This unity must be the energy of autonomous growth. Categorical faculties open into spiritual bundles of energies which change through their contacts with the energies of the milieu. The history of art becomes a process of open growth. What happens when the history of styles† deals with the present evolu-

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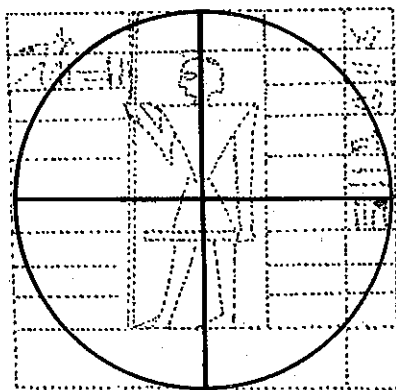
\* So the gap between the humanities and the sciences can be bridged at last.

† It depends wholly upon us how many styles we introduce into art history. The more the better, for by so doing we may get closer to the underlying self-changeability. The latter change cannot be defined by any stylistic concepts, for these concepts are too rigid and superficial. They are, after all, but temporary working hypotheses.

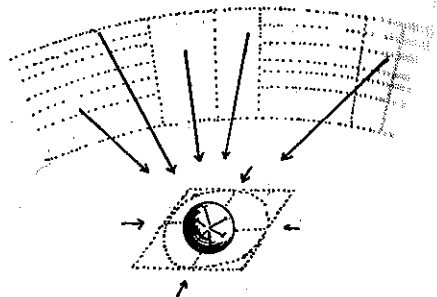
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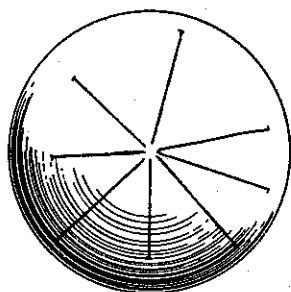
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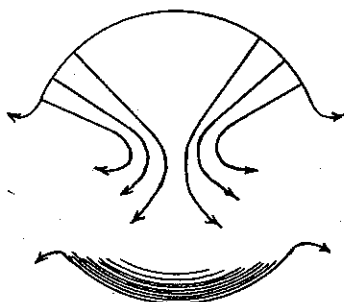
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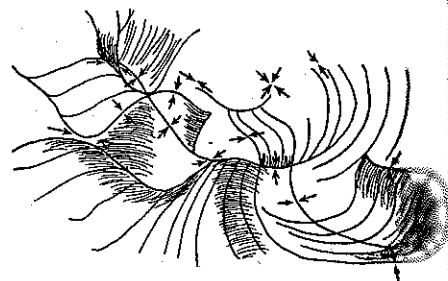
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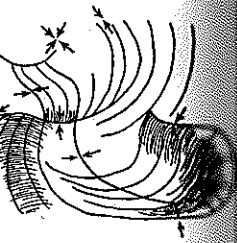
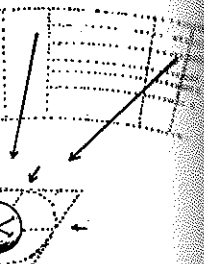


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*This summarizing diagram indicates how the Western picture of a three-dimensional reality (4) and its absolute ground originated and how it is now dissolving. It is only a temporary way of a temporary species of mind to deal with the energies of life. The energies working in man's experience create a constant transformation of his mental powers. This transformation is reflected in the constant growth of man's reality.*

*Man's past, present and future then are not supported and united by eternal ideas or timeless laws or Adamic mental categories. Such a certainty is not only obsolete but dangerous and deceptive. It chains us to immutable principles and makes us reactionary blocks in a life that is nothing but one tremendous act of ceaseless self-transformation. Life is not united statically but energetically, namely by the continuous process of interpenetrative transformation of all its energies resulting in an open growth never closed by any tombstone of immutability. Life never repeats itself. It has an overwhelming directing force revealed by evolutionary history. The urge of growth is the real force in our present life. Our new rationality is no longer one of Being but of Becoming.*



tion? Being concerned with the preservation of the "fundamental unity in variety" it can only point out what is "still here" instead of stressing what is now here for the first time. So it is bound to hinder modern life instead of aiding it and to widen the gap — which becomes more and more evident — between the reality of modern planning, design and science on the one hand and the reality of stylistic investigation on the other.\* Only by being regarded as open growth can art history be saved from that precarious situation.

The attempt of this book to perform such a service has doubtless been imperfect and much too sketchy to exhaust all the possibilities. But it may help to free the concept of historical evolution from the clogs of narrowness and rigidity which have been forced upon it by the tradition of three-dimensional thinking.

One thing seems certain: in art history, too, we may derive new strength from a thrust into a purely energetic substratum; and that strength may be used for the building of a new world which will no longer seek to stay the energy of spontaneous change but which will look upon it as a new hope.

The energies latent in modernized esthetics and art history may be used for the development of a new type of ART MUSEUM. Such a museum could interweave those energies much more closely with the energies of life than esthetics and art history have ever been able to do; and in consequence such a museum could transform life itself much more intensively. What would the new museum be like?

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\* How dangerous that gap is, and how misleading an analysis of modern and historical art movements can be when it contains the dilemma of a semi-static philosophy, is clear in Giedion's *Time, Space and Architecture* (Cambridge, 1941). Giedion sticks to timeless Adam faculties, as for instance "Space." So modern architecture and painting still represent the eternal human desire to express "movement in space." And there are THE eternal "basic elements" of architecture which in modern architecture are only "more rationally arranged" (obviously according to an equally timeless reason). The consequence of this semi-absolutistic philosophy is a bleeding of the real creative force behind all modern movements. Fundamentally Borromini and Tatlin, Turner and Paxton, the Surrealistic Picasso and the stroboscopic photographer, Leibniz, Newton and Einstein, Plato and Dewey all work with the same timeless human concepts. What else can modern art and architecture become under these circumstances but a new arrangement of basic elements, i.e. a "new style" — or as Giedion calls it, "a new tradition." With good instinct Giedion is fighting the split-personality of today, yet he does not realize that his own philosophy is still a typical split-philosophy that tries to preserve timeless elements in a world of change. According to Giedion's analysis, modern architecture lives still in the Newtonian world. Small wonder that the conclusion has been drawn from this book that modern architecture and art are far behind the natural and economic sciences and of very little help in solving our vital problems. We would not make an exception to the policy of our study and go into this criticism of an otherwise very useful book by one of the few pioneers in the history of modern architecture, were it not for showing how dangerous to future progress any semi-static philosophy of art and history must be.

First of all, it would no longer propagate "art" in the old sense. It would cease to be a temple of humanistic relics. It would show "art" for what it is, i.e. the product of a relatively short evolutionary phase and part of a finite and strictly limited reality. It would also begin to demonstrate the growth of reality and to show the visual production implicit in that growth. Historical realities would be brought alive in all their relativity, mutual tension and internal drive toward autonomous change. Then the museum would become infinitely more colorful — even in looks — than it is today.

As a whole the museum would have to show the forces active behind the various historical realities, using all possible sensory and intellectual resources of representation. It would have to show that the Egyptian relief, the Greek statue, the medieval altar and the Renaissance painting were transforming powers in their respective epochs, ever-new attempts which under the test of time changed into ever-new visions and are still continuing to change. It would have to teach through the individual example and through the whole art-historic process that there never was such a thing as the peace of an ultimate truth and beauty; that such a peace is inconceivable and that men are never the same, since their needs change continually as they themselves change together with their world concepts. In this manner the museum would spur us to learn from that process and to continue it more worthily. It would then point toward goals ahead.

In order to gain this new strength the museum would have to be flexible, both as to building and as to inner arrangement; flexible not for the sake of being always "different," offering constant novelties, but for the sake of transforming its own identity under the pressure of life's continuous and autonomous change. A deeper and more vital understanding of life's growing forces is bound to necessitate a new organization in everything, including modern design. The strength of the new museum would lie in the concentration and force of its life-improving and life-unifying energies. Its director would have to be more than an augments, conservator and tasteful arranger of his treasures. He would have to have the requisite imagination for making this new reality act upon the senses. He would have to collaborate with the pioneers of modern design. And there is one thing, especially, which the modern museum director would no longer be able to afford; namely, to wait until "the situation of modern art has become clarified." By so doing he would virtually decapitate the museum; and nobody expects a headless trunk to act and grow. The only meaning of the museum lies in its being a pioneer, in a double sense. First, the museum must finally bridge the gulf between

art and our industrial life. This it can only do by participating in all the struggles of the present. It must show that the most recent evolution is determined to bring about a new integration, and that modern design is no longer self-sufficient art — produced by dreamers withdrawn from life — but an active component of the new economy and society which it will help to unify. Second, it must show that the modern movement is inseparable from the whole evolution of historical art and that that evolution has been driving with tremendous momentum from the remote past into the immediate present. The art museum, then, must represent the same unifying philosophy of dynamic open growth that is gaining ascendancy in all other fields of inquiry. The only warrant of the art museum and of the esthetics and art history behind it is the present moment with its particular exigencies. But the “present moment” of yore is no longer that of our own epoch. Past exigencies craved the confirmation of an immutable truth, and the museum in its present form is still a valuable caterer to such needs. Yet our own needs are not served but rather frustrated by it. In order to serve us it must learn to distil a new progressive energy from the objects of art history. What we desire is not an immutable-form ideal or a loose arrangement of diverse styles but an irreversible evolving growth. We wish to thrust forward to the very energies that create that constant transformation of styles. Only the transforming power which leads from the old to the new can give meaning to both the old and the new.

The one and only thing that matters to us is ourselves and our vital problems. To recognize ourselves and our tasks we must discover the energies that, surging up from the past, have invaded our own lives. We exist solely as improvers of our heritage. An art museum that tries to separate the past from the present is indeed like a head without a body or a body without a head.

The new type of art museum must not only be not an “art” museum in the traditional static sense but, strictly speaking, not a “museum” at all. A museum conserves supposedly eternal values and truths. But the new type would be a kind of powerhouse, a producer of new energies. So long as the museum remains content to preserve old truths and to collect relics that house the timeless spirit of QUALITY it acts as an escape from life. Despite its air of restless activity it poses as a temple of tranquillity and peace — something that does not exist and should not be allowed to pretend to exist. It is like a dead hand reaching forward into our lives and stopping them.

It is quite natural that the present-day museum should affect us that way. Like our contemporary art life in general, the contemporary art



museum usually consists of two obsolete evolutionary stages and a new one. The last seems to move in the direction we have intimated and here and there we may already glimpse a new dawn. But the art museum, too, still contains a Baroque component, represented by the picture and sculpture gallery; beside these we have a component from the Enlightenment and Romanticism, represented by the period room. These two old components dominate the museum of today, and they are responsible for its static character. (The third component is still too weak to change that character.) Because of its idealistic basis the art museum not only stands outside the materialistic-practical life of the day but it also has none of the energy displayed by the modern movements. The new type of museum would begin to partake of that energy. It would not only be more alive and stimulating but also much more easy to establish, for it would depend much less than the current type on quantitative accumulation, i.e. wealth. It would not require any gorgeous palaces of absolutistic ideal art but would be constructed functionally and flexibly of light modern materials. It would rely primarily upon the imagination and leadership of its staff, upon their sensibility and their organizing ability. It would really begin to "function." But above all it would recover that moral strength which the traditional museum has had for earlier and more static stages of reality. Like all new movements this new type of museum would then be an important factor in the urgently needed integration of life and in the unification of mankind on a dynamic basis.

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\*Terms which appear throughout the book are not listed in the index. Such terms are: Absolute, Art, Basic elements, Becoming, Being, Energies, Experience, Form, Force of change, Identity, Interpenetration, Rationality, Self-transformation, Semi-static, Static, Stasis and others.

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