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Author(s): Eric Michaud and Christopher Fox

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National Socialist Architecture as an Acceleration of Time

Eric Michaud

Translated by Christopher Fox

There is no document of civilization which is not at the same time a document of barbarism.

—WALTER BENJAMIN, “Theses on the Philosophy of History”

On 11 September 1935 at the Nazi Party Congress in Nürnberg, Adolf Hitler identified, more explicitly than ever before, the difference in temporality between a people and its artistic products. In an “Address on Art and Politics” he bombastically declared:

What would the Egyptians be without the pyramids and temples, . . . what would the Greeks be without Athens and the Acropolis; what Rome without its buildings. . . . We should not know that there was once a Maya people, or should regard that fact as of no account, were it not that the astonishment of our own age, the mighty ruins of the cities of such legendary peoples ever awake afresh the notice and arouse and hold the interest of researchers. No; no people lives longer than the products of its civilization! [kein Volk lebt länger als die Dokumente seiner Kultur!]¹

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1. Adolf Hitler, *The Speeches of Adolf Hitler, April 1922–August 1939*, trans. and ed. Norman H. Baynes, 2 vols. (London, 1942), 1:573; hereafter abbreviated S.

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This last turn of phrase caught his fancy. Two years later he had it engraved on a bronze plaque above the entrance to the Palace of German Art built in Munich by Ludwig Troost, the first official architect of the Third Reich. In the bronze of that plaque, in its very nature as a bronze plaque, the engraved words themselves attest to the truth of their claim. These words will live longer, of course, than the man who spoke them in the name of the German people. They immediately raised themselves to the status of "eternal truth" when the national press printed a photograph of the plaque with the following caption: "The foundation of National Socialist artistic creation" ["Die Grundsätze nationalsozialistischen Kunstschaffens"].²

Taking on the value of prophecy, the words of the Führer hide a death threat directed against his people. They command the visitor to face his destiny as a function of his Germanness. They free him from the illusion that he is here to enjoy the new works of art of the Thousand Year Reich. If he enters into this sanctuary of German art, it is in order to anticipate his own death. "No people lives longer than the products of its civilization."

In this constant need to appeal to each German, each member of the community, the *Volksgemeinschaft*, to anticipate his own death, the well-known thesis of Walter Benjamin takes on its full weight. His thesis is more than a general characterization of fascism as an "aestheticization of politics," even though there is a certain tendency to reduce it to this. Such a trait is not specific to fascism. Benjamin, we must remember, had in mind a particular "situation of politics," where mankind's "self-alienation has reached such a degree that it can experience its own destruction as an aesthetic pleasure of the first order." Benjamin, however, was thinking not so much of Nazism but more of Italian fascism and of its herald, Filippo Marinetti, who saw the aesthetic realization of

2. See Joseph Wulf, *Die bildenden Künste im Dritten Reich: Eine Dokumentation* (1963; Frankfurt am Main, 1983), p. 239.

Eric Michaud is maître de conférences at the Institut d'histoire de l'art of the University of Strasbourg. He is the author of *Théâtre au Bauhaus, 1919–1929* (1978), *La Fin du salut par l'image* (1992), and, related to the topic of National Socialism, "Nazisme et représentation," *Critique* (Dec. 1987). He is also the coauthor, with Mikkel Borch-Jacobsen and Jean-Luc Nancy, of *Hypnoses* (1984), and is currently writing a book entitled *Un Art de l'éternité: Le National-socialisme et l'usage de l'art*. **Christopher Fox** is a Ph.D. student in the French department at the Johns Hopkins University.

futurism in war. It was in *this* aestheticization of politics that he envisioned “the consummation of ‘*l’art pour l’art*.’”³

National Socialist ideology never directly equated war with the realization of the eternal Reich. On a more basic level, it equated the “struggle for art” [“*der Kampf um die Kunst*”] with the affirmation of the German people’s “moral right to exist,” an ideology formulated with the assurance of all the people who turn “culture” into the highest realization of man.

Art, then, in the most general sense, and architecture more particularly, were conceived as the most powerful if not the only justification for the *existence* of the German people and its Führer. In 1933 in an “Address on Race and Culture,” also delivered at Nürnberg, Hitler proclaimed that “even if a people dies out and if men fall silent, the stones will speak. . . . Each great political period in world history demonstrates the well-foundedness of its existence by the most visible documentations of its value—by its cultural manifestations.”⁴ Two years later Hitler reformulated the same claims in his “Address on Art and Politics,” calling art

the visible demonstration of a people’s higher values which, as the experience of history shows, still remain after millennia the indestructible witnesses not merely of the greatness of a people but at the same time also of the people’s moral right to life.

Yes, and even if the last living witnesses of such an unfortunate people have closed their mouths in death, then the stones will begin to speak. [S, p. 573]

This later reformulation, however, was not redundant. In 1933 cultural manifestations demonstrated the well-foundedness [*le bien-fondé*] of the existence of the *great political periods of history*; by 1935 they became the indestructible witnesses of *the greatness of a people* and of *their moral right to exist*. Their task was no longer to justify the national revolution as a political moment in history, but to justify the German people’s very right to live.

But in Hitler’s eyes the work in stone is witness first and foremost to the greatness of the people of *the past*, since it is only retroactively that the work in stone justifies their existence. Thus the German people will only be great, will only justify its existence, if it proves capable of anticipating its own disappearance. The architecture called *das Wort aus Stein* by Hitler, the word of stone, becomes the actual *raison d’être* of the German people. But this *raison d’être* is at the same time a reason for its death. It is only once dead that a people, through its monuments, attests to its great-

3. Walter Benjamin, *Illuminations: Essays and Reflections*, trans. Harry Zohn, ed. Hannah Arendt (1968; New York, 1989), p. 242.

4. Hitler, *Die Reden Hitlers am Reichsparteitag 1933* (Munich, 1934), p. 30.

ness. Therefore, the Third Reich can declare itself eternal only insofar as it apprehends itself beyond its own death.

Even more than the fascism of Marinetti, Nazism, I would argue, constitutes a perfect realization of the doctrine of art for art's sake. What else is National Socialist rhetoric? Even if "no people lives longer than the products of its civilization," "even if a people dies out and if men fall silent, the stones will speak." Each of these stones, set solidly in place, assures each member of the *Volksgemeinschaft* his place in the bosom of the eternal Reich.

Everything disappears.—Robust art
Alone is eternal,
The bust
Outlives the city.⁵

These lines were written by Théophile Gautier eighty years before the opening of the Palace of German Art. Gautier, widely known as the first theorist of the doctrine of art for art's sake, nevertheless still held the violence of war to be contrary to the calm eternity of the art created alongside such violence:

During the wars of the Empire,
Goethe, at the sound of the brutal cannon,
Wrote *Occidental-Oriental Poems*,
A cool oasis where art breathes. . . .

Without worrying about the storm
Which beat against my closed windows,
I wrote *Enamels and Cameos*.⁶

Far from setting the soldier and the artist in opposition, National Socialism confers upon each man who fights for the Reich the dignity of the artist. Each man is assigned the task of outliving himself through the speaking stones of the Reich's eternity. It is this alchemy through which the living body of each member of the community is transmuted into a work of art that I would like to examine.

In a book published in 1923 entitled *Das dritte Reich*, Möller van den Bruck wrote that "the greatness of a man is: to be something more than his

5. Théophile Gautier, "L'Art," *Émaux et Camées* (1857; Paris, 1947), p. 131: "Tout passe.—L'art robuste / Seul a l'éternité, / Le buste / Survit à la cité."

6. Gautier, preface to *ibid.*, p. 3: "Pendant les guerres de l'empire, / Goethe, au bruit du canon brutal, / Fit le *Divan occidental*, / Fraîche oasis où l'art respire. . . . Sans prendre garde à l'ouragan / Qui fouettait mes vitres fermées, / Moi, j'ai fait *Émaux et Camées*."

mere self. The greatness of a nation is: to be greater than itself, to be able to communicate something of itself; to possess something that it can communicate.”⁷

One year later, in *Mein Kampf*, Hitler divided humanity into three distinct groups: the *Kulturbegründer*, the *Kulturträger*, and the *Kulturzerstörer*: “If we divide the human race into three categories—founders, maintainers, and destroyers of culture—the Aryan stock alone can be considered as representing the first category,” the position from which they derived their “moral right to exist.” Their task was not only to use the so-called bearers of culture to communicate and expand Aryan culture, but also to protect it against the *Kulturzerstörer*.⁸

In his eyes, this task included the right to combat all forms of art that seemed to corrode the ideal image of his people, and thereby threatened its “moral right to exist.” The forms of contemporary art embodied only the various incarnations of the *Kulturzerstörer*, the Judeo-Bolsheviks, as he called them. This is why the struggle *for* art was at the same time a struggle *against* those whose productions threatened the integrity of German art. Hitler’s claim that “no people lives longer than the products of its civilization” meant this as well. Destroying the culture of another people carried with it the destruction of the people themselves by suppressing its “moral right to exist.”⁹

Thus the function of the Palace of German Art and its solemn warning becomes clear. It seeks to change the visitor into a “soldier-artist,” into that man whose task it is to outlive himself in the eternity of the Reich. Hitler’s formulation—more than a threat and more than a prophecy—took on the constraining force of a performative utterance: “Die greater than you are!”

7. Möller van den Bruck, *Germany's Third Empire*, trans. E. O. Lorimer (London, 1934), p. 257. “Why was he not one of us,” Goebbels asked in reading it on 30 December 1925 (Joseph Goebbels, *The Early Goebbels Diaries*, trans. Oliver Watson, ed. Helmut Heiber [London, 1962], pp. 57–58). For van den Bruck’s influence on Nazi ideology, see Fritz Stern, *The Politics of Cultural Despair: A Study in the Rise of Germanic Ideology* (Berkeley, 1961).

8. Hitler, *My Battle*, trans. E. T. S. Dugdale (Boston, 1933), p. 122.

9. Hitler, one must recall, always identified his weltanschauung with “religion,” requiring faith and intolerance:

A World-Theory is intolerant and is not content with being one party among a number of other parties; it insists on exclusive and persistent recognition of itself and on an absolutely new conception of the whole of public life in accordance with its views. Thus it cannot tolerate continuance of a force representing the former conditions.

It is the same with religions. Christianity was not content with merely erecting its own altar; it was forced to proceed to destroy the altars of the heathen. Such fanatical intolerance alone made it possible to build up that adamantine creed; it is an absolutely essential condition of its existence. [Hitler, *My Battle*, p. 190]

For Dietrich Eckart’s influence on Hitler and the origin of “German art” as a “witness” to the “German right to exist,” see Henry Grosshans, *Hitler and the Artists* (New York, 1983), pp. 66–67; see also n. 23 below.

But what was behind the facade of this temple imitating a classical style, whose cornerstone was put in place by Hitler himself soon after coming to power and whose contents were selected by him each year? Along with innumerable German landscapes painted in honor of the fertile earth, two types of subject seem especially interesting to me. First, there was a plethora of works that encourage the production of life, like the sculpted and painted *Judgement of Paris* images, by Josef Thorak and Ivo Saliger. These works contained many promises for the future of the "master race." Second, there were those that encourage the sacrifice of that life, such as all of the flesh *Ready for Combat* depicted by Rudolf Otto or Josef Riedl.

Such Nazi imagery suggests two important aspects of National Socialist ideology. It signifies, first, the eternity of the racial soul, in Hitler's words, a "living substance." This eternal soul is sometimes grecianized in the nude form of the bodies that incarnate it. Sometimes it is differently historicized, in which case clothing, whether Greek, medieval, Renaissance, or contemporary, becomes an indispensable mark of its identity since this soul can only posit its identity by appropriating the successive stages of its expansion. Munich academic Edgar Schindler expressed this attitude perfectly when he wrote in 1936 that:

Art is the Führer. It shows us, in the form of myth, where we come from and where we are going. It is a symbol of ourselves, it provides an image of the goal of our will. It accompanies us all the way to the grave with its melodies.¹⁰

The temple, therefore, does in fact house a god, and that god is a German god, the eternal soul of the people or of the race, its very "genius." It is first to Walter Otto and then to Otto Rank that we should credit the rediscovery of the Roman origins of the concept of genius as a "representation of the immortal soul," of that part of the subject that can, in Rank's words, "beget what is immortal, be it a child or a work." Beginning with what was first a purely individual meaning, equivalent to that of the Egyptian *ka* or the Greek *daimon*, genius, in a culture based on the rights of the father, finally came to mean also the reproductive power of the community, capable of begetting and thereby assuring its immortality.¹¹

Whether or not this hypothesis is philologically sound, the concept of

10. Edgar Schindler, "Gedanken zur Deutschen bildenden Kunst der Zukunft," *Das Bild* 9 (Sept. 1936): 356; quoted by Klaus Wolbert, "Programmatische Malerei," in *Kunst im dritten Reich: Dokumente einer Unterwerfung*, ed. Georg Bussman (exhibition catalog, Frankfurter Kunstverein, Frankfurt am Main, 15 Oct.–8 Dec. 1974), p. 140.

11. See Otto Rank, *Art and Artist: Creative Urge and Personality Development*, trans. Charles Francis Atkinson (1932; New York, 1975), pp. 19–20.

the eternal soul as a guardian genius of the race lies at the heart of the National Socialist doctrine, which is not a “simply” biological racism. “Race is the image of soul,” writes Alfred Rosenberg.¹² If Heinrich Himmler said again and again to the generals of the SS that the people needed a form of ancestor worship, it was because such worship could take the place of the genius of the race. “A people who believes in reincarnation and who honors its ancestors,” he declared, “and therefore honors itself, always begets children and lives forever.”¹³

The second significant aspect of the Nazi imagery housed in the Palace of German Art now almost goes without saying: by gathering up all of these fragments of the eternal soul that were scattered throughout history, this imagery reconstitutes a divine racial guardian. This guardian, by appealing to the procreative act and to sacrifice, makes each visitor a soldier of the Reich who will perpetuate its eternity. This imagery is therefore a sort of passion accelerator that tends to speed up the natural cycle of birth and death. In the rhetoric of Nazi propaganda, slogans such as “make children for the Führer” and “die for the Führer” correspond to this imagery. They are, under the Third Reich, commonplace expressions of the omnipotence of the leader, equating him to time that gives and time that takes away.

“Total terror, the essence of totalitarian government,” as Hannah Arendt wrote, “is supposed to provide the forces of nature or history with an incomparable instrument to accelerate their movement.” Terror is a device found “not only to liberate the historical and natural forces, but to accelerate them to a speed they never would reach if left to themselves.”¹⁴ There is no doubt that the Nazi imagery I have described is an instrument of total terror. With its massive reproduction and distribution, it is a guide that is supposed to lead the German people to its end more quickly. “We judge art,” said Joseph Goebbels, “by its effects on the people and on the time. Beyond that, it does not interest us.”¹⁵ I would like to make the notion of such a passion accelerator of the natural movement of bodies more palpable by means of two images.

In the early days of the regime, Gerdy Troost built two neoclassical temples in Munich to house the tombs of those Nazis who died in the failed putsch of November 1923. They were called *Die ewige Wache*—the

12. Alfred Rosenberg, *The Myth of the Twentieth Century: An Evaluation of the Spiritual-Intellectual Confrontations of Our Age*, trans. Vivian Bird (Torrance, Calif., 1982), p. 4; hereafter abbreviated *M*.

13. Heinrich Himmler, speech of 18 Feb. 1937, *Discours secrets*, French trans. Marie-Martine Husson, ed. Bradley F. Smith and Agnes F. Peterson (Paris, 1978), p. 81.

14. Arendt, *The Origins of Totalitarianism* (1951; New York, 1966), p. 466.

15. Goebbels, speech of 1 June 1934, quoted in the *Encyclopédie Française*, 20 vols. (Paris, 1935), 16: 64–69.

“eternal vigil” or the “eternal watch.” As much as the Palace of German Art seemed to be shut in on itself with its classical colonnade and its immense corner pilasters, these two “temples to the heroes” were open on all sides and, as it were, to the four winds. All could see the tombs that they displayed. Architecture, according to Troost, ought to be “the educator of a new people.”¹⁶ Werner Rittich explained the meaning of such an education when in 1938 he described the function of these temples:

the sixteen martyrs [*Blutzeugen*] of 9 November 1923 who have found a common tomb here and who mount an “eternal watch” among the living, here, before the buildings of the Party are, because of their eagerness for service [*Einsatzbereitschaft*] and their sacrifice, a permanent example to an entire people, a permanent exhortation to the fulfillment of its duty, to its involvement in its affairs and to its sacrifice.¹⁷

The second image is of the necropolises planned by architect Wilhelm Kreis starting in 1940. These actual cities of the dead were to skirt the extremes of the new Nazi Europe, extending from the Urals to the Atlantic and from Norway to Greece. According to Kreis these necropolises were not conceived as mere “sites erected in honor of the dead,” but rather as symbols of “the meaning of a great historical turning-point,” as “an eternal reminder . . . of the unification of Europe as carried out by the German people, its very heart. . . . The buildings will be surrounded by the tombs of the generation of German warriors who defended the existence of the Western world, as they have so often done for the last two thousand years.”¹⁸

From the first “temples of the martyrs,” open on all sides, in the center of Munich (a city renamed *Die Hauptstadt der Bewegung*, the Capital of the Movement), to the huge, closed monuments of these necropolises that were to mark the borders of the future *Lebensraum*, the architecture of the community constituted a performative, as surely as did Hitler’s statement with which this paper began.

Architecture was to propel the German people to its common destiny by revealing its true grandeur in funeral monuments. Rosenberg defined the appropriate life-style of the newly formed community as “the style of a column on the march, no matter what its destination, no matter what its purpose.”¹⁹ Hitler, however, was more specific in his

16. *Das Bauen im neuen Reich*, ed. Gerdy Troost (Bayreuth, 1938), p. 10.

17. Werner Rittich, *Architektur und Bauplastik der Gegenwart* (Berlin, 1938), p. 32.

18. Wilhelm Kreis, quoted in Hildegard Brenner, *Die Kunstpolitik der Nationalsozialismus* (Reinbek bei Hamburg, 1963), pp. 128–29.

19. Rosenberg, quoted in Hermann Rauschning, *Die Revolution des Nihilismus: Kulisse und Wirklichkeit im dritten Reich* (Zürich, 1938), p. 77.

speeches; he clearly stated that the living architecture of this column comes to its end in stone.

In Nürnberg, it is this march toward a common death and to a common, racial tomb that stirs Hitler, as if he were viewing the entire film of “his” people on fast-forward, beginning with its entry into history and ending with its departure from it:

Who could remain unmoved when thinking that the thousands of men parading now before us are not only individuals moving in the present, but the eternal expression of the vitality of our people in the past and in the future as well? . . . The path which they follow has been followed by our people for centuries, and we need only close our eyes for a second to imagine the sound of the forward march of the ancestors of our entire race.²⁰

The fact that Hitler could say to Hermann Rauschnig, “‘The new man is among us! He is here!’” demonstrates that an identification of the present with the past and with the future of the *Volksgemeinschaft* makes its death and its life happen at the same time.²¹ The new man is erected in stone and standing “among the living,” just as in the temples at Munich. Thus, the word of stone overtakes the living present of each of those whom Hitler terms “individuals moving in the present.”

National Socialism forces each of these individuals to cast onto his own present the same gaze that Hitler casts onto “his” people. Hitler’s gaze is a retrospective one set on the past and the present from the future of the *Volksgemeinschaft*. It is the gaze of an artist: “Everything disappears.—Robust art / Alone is eternal, / The bust / Outlives the city.” This artist, however, chooses to outlive himself by outliving the body politic, bodies that have been turned to stone by his artistic gaze.

We might ask, then, why the monuments erected under National Socialism to “incarnate” the community of the German people were imitations of the styles of the past, unlike the vernacular style adopted for youth hostels and model farms or the functionalism adopted for factories. Even though neoclassical style took over official architecture in both Europe and the United States during the 1930s, it was something more than fashion that explains why the German community was incarnated in imitations of Athens or of Babylon, of Frederick II’s Castel del Monte or of the Roman Colosseum. It is not only to allow the community to identify with the “eternal soul of the race” by appropriating scattered fragments of it. In this instance, to imitate the styles of the past is to make something into the past, to pass something off and to make it pass away, to give visible and tangible proof, in the here and now, of the grandeur of a community that

20. Hitler, *Principes d’action* (Paris, 1936), pp. 109–10.

21. Rauschnig, *The Voice of Destruction* (New York, 1940), p. 247.

has become a work of art. It is to give proof of the power of a community incarnated as past, at the same time *already there* and *already historical*.

The desire to speed up the natural movement of the community forms a structure of anticipating the end of that community. This structure is most clearly revealed in Speer's "Theory of Ruin Value" of a monument. Once he became Hitler's head architect after Troost's death, Speer had the reinforced concrete structures that had been put up on the site of the vast rostrum at Nürnberg demolished. Seeing the iron protruding from concrete debris and beginning to rust, the following thought came to mind:

It was hard to imagine that rusting heaps of rubble could communicate these heroic inspirations which Hitler admired in the monuments of the past. My "theory" was intended to deal with this dilemma. By using special materials and by applying certain principles of statics, we should be able to build structures which even in a state of decay, after hundreds or (such were our reckonings) thousands of years would more or less resemble Roman models.

To illustrate my ideas I had a romantic drawing prepared. It showed what the reviewing stand on the Zeppelin Field would look like after generations of neglect, overgrown with ivy, its columns fallen, the walls crumbling here and there, but the outlines still clearly recognizable.²²

This sketch, not surprisingly, received the enthusiastic approval of Hitler, who recognized in it his own anticipation of the end of the *Volk* community. Speer was on target when he presented to Hitler that moment in which "men fall silent" and allow the stones to speak. This is the moment in which history recognizes the soldiers of the community as artists, or as *Kulturbegründer*, long after their movement has been fixed in stone.

Deutschland erwache!—"Germany, awake!" is commonly known to be the most invasive of the National Socialist slogans.²³ It invaded every aspect of daily life, all the while giving those objects whose function related to communication, such as pencils, radios, and matchboxes,

22. Albert Speer, *Inside the Third Reich*, trans. Richard and Clara Winston (New York, 1970): 56.

23. A drawing by Hitler with four sketches of Dietrich Eckart displays the following in Hitler's handwriting: "Dietrich Eckart, chief editor of the 'Völkischer Beobachter,' creator of the fight slogan of the movement: 'Deutschland erwache!' at the age of 54 in 1922—A. Hitler 22" (quoted in Billy F. Price, *Adolf Hitler, the Unknown Artist* [Houston, 1984], p. 203). From 1922 on, the rhetoric of dream and awakening became a leitmotif of Nazism: "'Irresponsible dreamers' for years and years have called upon the people to rise up against enslavement and oppression." "Still, all of Germany has not been

greater symbolic weight. It was necessary to rouse each German from the sleep of daily life to make them heroes of the Movement.²⁴

Rosenberg provides an explanation for this in *The Myth of the Twentieth Century*. Those races or peoples who were described by Hitler as founders, bearers, or destroyers of culture correspond here to those races whose dreams are prophetic, those who have no dreams at all, and those whose dreams are destructive, such as the Jews who dream of gold, of power, of lies, and of hatred (see *M*, pp. 281–83). Germans had to be roused from the sleep of daily life because they were no longer the authors of their own dreams. “Because we had ceased to search for our dream,” claims Rosenberg, “and because we had lost our dream, we had even attempted to experience the dream of the Jews. This also caused the German collapse of 1918.” This “mythical awakening” is the “greatest and most blessed thing in the German life” (*M*, p. 283).²⁵

Deutschland erwache! then, means that Germany must wake up from this bad dream in order to *live its own dream at last*, that is, the dream of its genius. “The fact is that we have again begun to dream our own primal dreams” (*M*, p. 283). Thus the mythical awakening is the race waking up “to itself,” the awakening of its eternal soul. It is a waking *in myth*, by means of which the German can at last live his own dream, that is, to *fulfill the prophetic dream of his race*.

The figural arts had the function of reconstructing the memory of the eternal soul, of producing primal dream images to reanimate the racial genius and set it in motion once again. “A people,” says Rosenberg, “is lost as a people and is dead, if, in surveying its history and in testing its will-to-the-future, it cannot discover unity” (*M*, p. 428). The function of the monuments that house this genius, however, is of a different order: these monuments must realize the primal dream, they must fulfill its prophecy and transform, in marble and granite, this fluid dream of eternity into a solid and eternal Reich.

The proliferation under the Third Reich of books about architecture

awakened yet—despite National Socialism. My words shall be a trumpet call to those who are still asleep” (Ernst Röhm, quoted in George L. Mosse, *Nazi Culture: Intellectual, Cultural and Social Life in the Third Reich*, trans. Salvator Attanasio [New York, 1966], pp. 103, 102).

24. See *Nazi-Kitsch*, ed. Rolf Steinberg (Darmstadt, 1975), pp. 28, 32, 62.

25. See van den Bruck on Otto von Bismarck’s empire: “Germany was now without a dream. . . . We left the dreaming of political dreams to other peoples.” “The thought of the Third Empire—to which we must cling as our last and highest philosophy—can only bear fruit if it is translated into concrete reality. It must quit the world of dreams and step into the political world” (Van den Bruck, *Germany’s Third Empire*, pp. 20, 14). For a recent emphasis on the dream in Rosenberg’s rhetoric, see Philippe Lacoue-Labarthe and Jean-Luc Nancy, “The Nazi Myth,” trans. Brian Holmes, *Critical Inquiry* 16 (Winter 1990): 291–312.

reveals more than the fact that they played an essential role. These books accord an importance to models of future buildings equal to that of buildings already erected. The models, although still just tenuous dreams, are photographed as if they were already there, already constructed.

Sculpt, file, chisel;
 May your floating dream
 Be embedded
 In the resisting block.²⁶

These lines from the end of Gautier's poem *L'Art* further confirm the closeness of Nazism and the theory of art for art's sake. But for Nazism it is the genius of a *people of artists* and not of a solitary hero that finds the promise of a dreamed eternity and of salvation "in the resisting block." Because the dream of the *Kulturbeträger* is, according to Rosenberg, to provide a body for their dreams, it is fulfilled by an ever greater denial of the reality of the body of the other, be it the body of people with no dreams or of people with destructive dreams.

The monument is therefore not only the fulfillment of the prophetic dream on a quasi-hallucinatory plane; it is also an expansion of the *Lebensraum* of the dream, an expansion of the space necessary to the survival of the dream in a world hostile to it and against which it struggles. "Two cannot stand in one and the same place and where we have once taken our stand, there is no room for another" (S, p. 511).

In addition to assuring the continuation of the dream of those who have "begun to dream their primal dreams," the monument must also assure the mythical awakening of those who remain deep within the sick sleep of daily life and ward off those who threaten the continuation of the dream. For that reason, the monument's effect changes depending on whether it is within or outside the *Volk* community. Outside of the community, the monument shows the common resolution of the people to surpass itself continuously and crushingly. The terror that it inspires is that which cripples the enemy or puts him to flight. Inside the community, it produces the salutary shock that rouses the people from its bad dream of daily life. The monument wakes the community to itself, that is, to the destiny inscribed within its primal dream of dying greater than it is. Because it is the solid extension of the primal dream, the monument protects the members of the *Volksgemeinschaft* from external dangers, giving them strength and courage.

"In the beginning was the Great," wrote the architect Friedrich Tamms, who defined the "law of the monumental" that inspired the

26. Gautier, "L'Art," p. 132: "Sculpte, lime, cisele; / Que ton rêve flottant / Se scelle / Dans le bloc résistant!"

architecture of the community:

It must have within it the measure “of what touches the heavens.” It must go beyond human scale. It should be executed with amplitude, solidly put together, and built according to the most established rules of the trade, as if it were for eternity. It must in the practical sense, be absolutely without utility, but it must have an idea behind it. It must have something in it which is inaccessible and which fills men with awe, but also with fear. It must be impersonal, because it is not the work of an individual; it is the symbol of a community united under a single ideal.²⁷

The paradox of the National Socialist monument is that it is supposed to lead the authentic German back to his primal dream by imposing itself as that prophecy already realized. It is supposed to define a space in which the end *is* the beginning, in which the community, at last purified of the *other's* dream, remains eternally present to itself.

The deliberate “making-past”—the monuments erected or projected by the National Socialists to incarnate the community of the people, which were therefore planned as common graves for a heroic race of soldier-artists—cannot be separated from the refusal to provide some people with any grave at all. These were the people whom the National Socialists wished to exterminate. The gigantic mausoleums imitated from the past and destined for the eternally heroic *Volksgemeinschaft* correspond to the anonymity of mass graves, of gas chambers, and of crematory ovens, to a radical anonymity that was to erase from history even the very name of the Jewish people.

“There cannot be two Chosen People. We are God’s People.’” Very early on, Hermann Rauschnig pointed out the constant rivalry between Nazism and the Jewish people. “We must beat the Jew with his own weapon,” Hitler would say to him, opposing the “dirty and degrading self-mortifications of a chimera called conscience and morality,” to his own “saving doctrine of the nothingness and insignificance of the individual human being, and of his continued existence in the *visible* immortality of the nation.”²⁸

This rivalry, inscribed in the interpretation of the nature of the prophetic dream, asserts itself as much in the stone monument as in extermination. Nazism places its faith in the form and in the word of stone, in opposition to the Jewish people’s faith in the union of the living word with an unrepresentable and mute god. And while the invisible god is intelli-

27. Friedrich Tamms, “Das Grosse in der Baukunst,” *Die Baukunst*, suppl. to *Die Kunst im Deutschen Reich* 8 (Mar. 1944): 60.

28. Rauschnig, *The Voice of Destruction*, pp. 241, 238, 225; emphasis added.

ble only at the horizon of what Emmanuel Levinas calls the “insurmountable diachrony of time,” National Socialism endeavors to surmount and subjugate that diachrony of time. By means of a *Gleichschaltung*, a leveling, it visibly aligns bodies and their temporality as well. For this reason its desire to make its god visible is also a compulsion to make that god synchronous in the word of stone. It makes the monument a messiah for an impatient community, the heralded new man who came when summoned to liberate the community from time, who came to put an end to its waiting.