The Theatre Reform Movement

The sources of the theatre reform movement in the first decades of the twentieth century drew their inspiration from Wagner, in particular Parsifal, and from the theatre of the symbolists: “In the history of the modern theatre it is possible to trace a tradition from Wagner’s concept of Gesamtkunstwerk to the second generation symbolists (Appia, Craig, Meyerhold) and from them to the entire movement of the ‘retheatricalization’ of theatre, with the director as the master artist uniting the arts.”

The symbolist theatre of shadows and halftones is perhaps best exemplified by Debussy’s opera Pelléas et Mélisande (1902), based on Maeterlinck’s play, which also fascinated other leading composers of the time: Schoenberg, Sibelius, and Fauré. The symbolist reaction in the 1890s to naturalism was symptomatic of a wider quest that went beyond dissatisfaction with the prevailing realism of stage productions. It called into question the whole conception since the Renaissance of the theatre as a humanist-secular institution, epitomized by the theatre of illusion and perspective, in which the stage as peep show frames the action and separates actors and audience. The demand was not new, but it now

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became the decisive impulse to theatre reform and avant-garde experiments. Its corollary was the myth of the representative audience, which could be recovered and recreated only by returning to the popular roots of the theatre. Thus Max Reinhardt’s vision in 1901 of the theatre of the future: “a very large theatre for a great art of monumental effects, a festival theatre, detached from everyday life, a house of light and solemnity, in the spirit of the Greeks, not merely for the Greeks but for the great art of all epochs, in the shape of an amphitheatre, ... without the curtain, without wings, even perhaps without décor, and in the middle ... the actor, in the middle of the audience, and the audience itself, transformed into the people, drawn into, become a part of the action of the play.”

Reinhardt’s aim was to recover the popular roots of the theater, the communion between actors and audience, which had formed the basis of the great theatrical ages in the past.

Popular theatre, in this original sense, mediates on the one hand between the picture frame stage and religious cult in the form of the festival or consecrated stage, and on the other hand between the picture frame stage and folk entertainment in the form of circus, variété, and cabaret. In both these forms, the high and the low, popular theatre may be defined by a double de-individuating intention: the return of the audience to communal identity, symbolized by the chorus, but equally the presentation of the actor as persona, whether in tragic mask or clown’s costume. One path to de-individuation lay in dance. Alphonse Appia found the answer to his passionate desire for theatrical synthesis in Émile Jacques-Dalcroze’s eurhythmics. Appia worked at Dalcroze’s school of eurhythmics in the artists’ colony at Hellerau outside Dresden for ten years. One of the most notable fruits of their collaboration was the staging of Paul Claudel’s L’annonce faite à Marie (The Annunciation) in 1913. Appia aimed to complete Wagner’s liberation of music from its “egoistic and perverse isolation” through the eurhythmic liberation of the actor’s movements: drama and music were to attain a true unity through the consecration of “the divine union of music and the body.” Appia believed that “the harmonious culture of the body, obeying the profound orders of music,” would overcome the isolation of the spectator and transform his passivity into a sense of solidarity. He also looked to the cathedral of the future as the setting for “majestic festivals in which a whole people will participate.” In prewar Munich Georg Fuchs called for a return to dance as the primary source and form of theatre. He set out to renew Germany’s

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late medieval theatre tradition in its dual form of liturgical Christmas and Passion plays and the carnival plays of Hans Sachs, in order to escape from the primacy of the spoken word in the modern theatre. Instead of illusionistic stage depth Fuchs called for the flat relief-stage, and for the amphitheatre with its equality of seating to replace the hierarchical social space of boxes and balconies. Fuchs’s goal was a cultic festival in which all social barriers would be erased in Dionysian intoxication in order to realize the true purpose of theatre, communal fusion through entry into “a higher, ‘supra-real’ form of consciousness.”

Edward Gordon Craig carried the assault on the ego-centered modern actor to the point of demanding in 1908 his replacement by the dehumanized figure of the “Übermarionette”—in Craig’s eyes “the last echo of some noble and beautiful art of a past civilization,” “a descendent of the stone images of the old temples.” Craig’s quest for theatre reform was based, like Wagner’s, on a theory of the decadence of theatre since its separation from the great temple art of antiquity and of Asia. Nietzsche’s Superman becomes the puppet who symbolizes the once-and-future image of man: “When he comes again and is but seen, he will be loved so well that once more it will be possible for the people to return to their ancestral joy in ceremonies…. Once more will Creation be celebrated.” The Irish poet and playwright W. B. Yeats, whose play *The Deliverer* was produced by Craig in Dublin in 1911, echoed these sentiments when he wrote: “I have always felt that my work is not a drama but the ritual of a lost faith.”

It is clear that more is involved here than theatrical experiment. De-individuation is both the premise and the consequence of a rejection of modern theatre, in Brecht’s terminology the Aristotelian theatre of heroic figures and empathetic audiences. The desire to transform the theatre was driven by the idea of a theatre of transformation. Its theme: judgment on the modern, autonomous subject. Stripped of his pretensions, he becomes Everyman and No One, the puppet of God or the military machine, member of the Dionysian or Communist collective. Judgment and transformation effect the passage to the New World, the promised land of a retotalized, sacred, popular theatre.

Three dramatists of the 1920s will be considered in this chapter: Hugo von Hofmannsthal, Paul Claudel, and Bertolt Brecht, together with Antonin Artaud’s theatre writings and manifestos for a “theatre of cruelty.” The connections between them rest on inner and outer coincidence: the Catholics Hofmannsthal and Claudel both turned to the world theatre of the Spanish baroque. Hofmannsthal

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collaborated with the director Max Reinhardt in the Salzburg Festival, and a commission from Reinhardt was the occasion of Claudel’s spectacle *Christopher Columbus*, with music by Darius Milhaud. Brecht was greatly impressed by the premiere of Claudel’s play at the Berlin State Opera in 1930; his own treatment of the crossing of the Atlantic, the 1929 *Lehrstück* on the aviator Lindbergh with music by Paul Hindemith, can also be read as his version of Artaud’s theatre of cruelty.\(^{10}\) Artaud (1896–1948) and Brecht (1898–1956)—like Mallarmé and Nietzsche—were almost exact contemporaries.

**World Theatre: Hofmannsthal and Claudel**

The Salzburg Festival, inaugurated in 1919, was Hofmannsthal’s response to the defeat and dissolution of the Austro-Hungarian Empire. The heartland of Central Europe, Austria and Vienna, had suddenly been relegated to the periphery of the German “nation,” divided since the Reformation between the Protestant North and the Catholic South. The festival aimed at more, however, than a continuation of the baroque legacy of the Habsburgs. Hofmannsthal intended a cultural politics, whose stake was the divided soul of Germany, a cultural politics in the spirit of the Counter-Reformation, directed against the Protestant-bürgerlich definition of the German nation. Hofmannsthal’s Salzburg signifies in this sense the counterpart to Wagner’s Bayreuth. Each festival was dedicated to the cultural-political goal of the spiritual regeneration of the German nation through art. Each, moreover, identified the split between Protestant drama and Catholic opera as the cultural symptom of the divided German soul, which Wagner’s music drama and Hofmannsthal’s “German national programme” were to heal.

As his own long and productive collaboration with Richard Strauss indicates, Hofmannsthal saw himself as the inheritor of a great theatrical tradition, which did not separate opera and drama.\(^{11}\) Just as great operas—those by Gluck, Mozart, and Beethoven—are above all dramatic works, so great dramas—Goethe’s *Faust*, Shakespeare’s fantasy plays, Schiller’s romantic dramas—presuppose music. At the center of this great tradition stand Mozart’s operas and Goethe’s *Faust*; they form what Hofmannsthal calls “the German national programme of 1800,” which included, besides the ancients, modern—English, Spanish, and French—drama. On what grounds, however, can Hofmannsthal reclaim Goethe and Schiller and Weimar classicism from the Protestant North and the concepts of *Bildung* and *Kultur* for his programme? On what grounds can Salzburg displace Weimar and Bayreuth?

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as the site that truly corresponds to the nation, indeed claims to be “the heart of the heart of Europe”?\textsuperscript{12}

Hofmannsthal’s “national” programme of 1800 looks back to a prerevolutionary Europe and to the universalism of the Catholic Church. It turns its back on the political and cultural nationalisms of the nineteenth century, which led Europe into the catastrophe of 1914 and tore the supranational Austro-Hungarian Empire apart. Just as the “people” must reconcile class divisions, so the lost tradition of popular theatre must reconcile the modern splitting of the public into the elite and the masses. Thus against Bayreuth, dedicated to one great artist,\textsuperscript{13} and against a Germany in the image of Weimar, Hofmannsthal sets the whole classical heritage of the nation, which extends from the Middle Ages up to Mozart and Goethe in an unbroken theatrical tradition, whose organic development is rooted in the popular culture of the South, that is, the Austrian-Bavarian lands. Hofmannsthal is at pains to underline what he calls the southern German theatrical forms present in Goethe’s world theatre: \textit{Faust} incorporates mystery and morality play, puppet theatre and courtly opera with chorus and stage machinery. At the heart of Austria/Bavaria is Salzburg, not Vienna. The modern cosmopolitan metropolis cannot play this reintegrating national role. Salzburg thus stands for the romantic redefinition of society as community, as “aesthetic totality.”\textsuperscript{14}

To create this totality through the moral and magic powers of a retotalized theatre, the collaboration of Max Reinhardt was essential. In 1917 Reinhardt submitted a memorandum to the Austrian Ministry of Culture proposing the building of a theatre in Hellbronn near Salzburg, dedicated to the original and final expression of the theatre, the festival play, as it had been realized by the Greeks and in the medieval mysteries and Passion plays of the church. Reinhardt had already achieved some of his greatest prewar successes through arena spectacles for a mass audience. Perhaps the best known was his 1911 production of the pantomime \textit{The Miracle} by Karl Vollmüller with music by Humperdinck, performed by two thousand actors before an audience of thirty thousand at the Olympic Hall in London, transformed for the occasion into the interior of a Gothic cathedral. In the following years this production was performed in Vienna, various German cities, New York, and then at the Salzburg Festival in 1924. In 1910 Reinhardt directed \textit{Oedipus Rex} in Hofmannsthal’s adaptation at the Circus Schumann in Berlin, and in 1911 Hofmannsthal’s version of the medieval English morality play \textit{Everyman} at the same venue.


\textsuperscript{13} The Salzburg Festival planners were fascinated, however, by \textit{Parsifal} as a “stage consecration festival play,” which claimed “to merge sacred theatre (communion and Mont Salvat) and secular theatre (the performance of the Parsifal myth and Bayreuth) into a representation of a mythically determined cultural renewal.” Michael P. Steinberg, \textit{The Meaning of the Salzburg Festival: Austria as Theatre and Ideology, 1890–1938} (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1990), 30.

\textsuperscript{14} Steinberg, \textit{Meaning of the Salzburg Festival}, 78.
If *Oedipus* figures as a production of major importance in the history of twentieth-century theatre, if *Everyman* failed to impress. Before a more congenial audience in Salzburg in 1920, however, staged in front of the cathedral, it made a profound impact and remained central to the festival up to 1937, forming with *Don Giovanni* and *Faust* a trinity of Catholic morality plays.

The success of *Everyman* fulfilled Hofmannsthal’s idea of the festival play and confirmed the ideological goal of the Salzburg Festival: the transformation of the theatre public into the “people.” As Hofmannsthal put it, the public is capricious and moody, whereas the people is old and wise and recognizes the food that it needs. To this end the modern playwright must have recourse to the great and simple dramatic forms that were truly the products of the people. In 1920 the difference between public and people was identified with the difference between Berlin or Vienna and Salzburg. In 1911, in relation to the Berlin production of *Everyman*, Hofmannsthal had tried to persuade himself that concealed within the metropolitan masses the people still exists, ready to respond to the revival of “this eternally great fairy tale.” Built around the great opposition between the profane and the sacred, earthly life and salvation, *Everyman*, he declared, is still illuminated by a divine light.

The audience’s reception of the medieval morality play in Salzburg encouraged Hofmannsthal to rework Calderón’s most famous contribution to the genre of the *auto sacramental*, *The Great Theatre of the World*. The dramatic metaphor of the *theatrum mundi*, in which man plays the role allotted by God in the game of life, provided the perfect model for a retotalized theatre. In world theatre the stage is absorbed into the world, conceived and represented as play. The *macrocosm*, the world as play, gives meaning to the *microcosm*, the stage play. The hierarchical division of the stage into the three levels of Heaven, Earth, and Hell is crowned by the visible presence of God, who *authorizes* representation, thereby canceling the difference between actor and role, stage and audience. It was only appropriate that the *auto sacramental*, performed on the Feast of Corpus Christi, concluded with the mystery of Real Presence, the miracle of the Eucharist in the Mass. Hofmannsthal’s *Salzburg Great World Theatre* sought to refunct this sacred form for contemporary purposes by expanding the role of the beggar in revolt against God’s world order into an allegorical demonstration of the overcoming of the destructive forces of revolution by divine grace. Here the suggestive power of Reinhardt’s staging in the University Church in Salzburg (by the baroque master Fischer von Erlach) came to the rescue of Hofmannsthal’s undramatic allegory. Here too, as in *Everyman*, the figure of Death the drummer, leading the players—King, Rich Man,

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17. Ibid., 64.
Beauty, Wisdom, Peasant—in a dance of death, had the desired effect on the audience. Hofmannsthal speaks of this dance of death as one of the strongest scenes of any of Reinhardt’s productions, holding the audience spellbound as death fetched each figure in turn in a pantomime in which the figures followed like puppets the beat of the drum.\footnote{18}

The ideological programme of the Salzburg Festival found its most problematic extension in Hofmannsthal’s call in a public lecture at Munich University in 1927 for a “conservative revolution.” It was once again the question of the healing of the divided German soul. Now, however, Hofmannsthal seeks to harness the “Faustian,” eternally restless and unsatisfied soul of Protestant “worldlessness” to his own Counter-Reformation, predicated on the “frightful experience” of the nineteenth century, which has brought us to the realization that it is impossible to live without a totality formed by faith.\footnote{19} How Hofmannsthal’s anti-Protestant nation is to be constructed out of Protestant spirit (Geist) remains a mystery. He would have been horrified, had he lived to see Hitler’s “synthesis” of Catholic ritual and Protestant efficiency. Or must we conclude that Hofmannsthal’s Salzburg was just as much a symptom as Wagner’s Bayreuth of what the Austrian novelist Hermann Broch diagnosed as the value-vacuum of German art, whose symptomatic expression was precisely the longing for the total work of art? There is a kind of negative symmetry between Hofmannsthal’s analysis of the German soul (against the countermodel of France and Austria) after the First World War and Broch’s dissection of the Austrian soul (against the example of France) after the Second World War. Whereas Hofmannsthal embraces the seekers after synthesis, Broch places the fata morgana of synthesis at the heart of his essay “Hofmannsthal and His Age: A Study.” Both writers share, however, a similarly negative interpretation of modernity as the “disintegration of values” (the title of the third, concluding part of Broch’s novel The Sleepwalkers, 1931). For Broch the disintegration of values is the key to the “merry apocalypse” of the Austro-Hungarian Empire after 1880, which made Vienna the center of the European value-vacuum.\footnote{20}

Broch’s moral intention appears clearly at the beginning of his study, where he states that the essence of a period can usually be read from its architectonic facade. That of the second half of the nineteenth century, the period in which Hofmannsthal (1874–1929) was born, is identified as one of the most miserable, since it was the period of eclecticism, of the false baroque, the false Renaissance, the false Gothic.\footnote{21} It was not by chance that this half century was also the period par excellence of opera house construction, with the Paris Opera (1857–74) and the Vienna Opera

\footnote{18. See Hofmannsthal’s description of Reinhardt’s production in Cynthia Walk, Hofmannsthal’s Grosses Welttheater (Heidelberg: Winter, 1980), 120–21.}
\footnote{19. Hofmannsthal, Gesammelte Werke, 4: 410–13.}
\footnote{21. Ibid., 43.
(1861–69) leading the way. If they became the representative opera houses of the period, it was because Paris and Vienna had been the two centers of absolutism in Europe in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, which had made the celebration of the alliance of Catholic throne and altar the task of public representative art. But while the French Revolution had transformed Paris into a world city, Vienna remained a baroque city that clung to tradition, to become after 1848 its own museum, “symbol of the empty form, of the value-vacuum,” “a sign of decadence.”  

Behind the false facades of the museum city, Broch discerns the longing, typical of an age both historicist and decadent, for a great style, for a great art, the longing that art should become once more myth, represent once more the “totality of the universe,” a longing that had made Wagner’s theatrical genius the mirror of the vacuum. The Gesamtkunstwerk, the product of Wagner’s “epochal instinct,” was the “total expression” of the “un-style” of the age: the self-representation of an age of irrational, mystical, and pseudo-mythical decoration.

And Hofmannsthal? He clung to Austria’s long theatrical tradition in the hope that the stage as the setting for a higher reality would open the way back to community for the isolated artist. His collaboration with Richard Strauss amounted to a vain, anti-Wagnerian attempt to revive the disappearing Austrian legacy through a “baroque-tinted” grand opera. Did Hofmannsthal recognize that he was assimilating himself to the vacuum in his self-delusions regarding the Salzburg Festival or in his despairing conjuration of a European “conservative revolution”?

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Seeking to commission a grandiose spectacle that could repeat the success of The Miracle, Reinhardt approached Claudel in 1927, who responded by writing The Book of Christopher Columbus in August of the same year. Claudel wanted to work with Darius Milhaud, with whom he had already collaborated in the production of his translation of the Oresteia, despite Reinhardt’s choice of Richard Strauss and then Manuel de Falla. Having agreed to Milhaud for a production at the Salzburg Festival in August 1928, Reinhardt then withdrew, citing financial difficulties. Milhaud nevertheless completed the music and found, on the basis of the success of his ballet, La création du monde, a backer in Ludwig Hörth, the director of the Berlin State Opera, where the drama with music was premiered in May 1930. From the first, Claudel envisaged a total theatre with music, chorus, dance, and film. It offered him the chance to clarify his ambivalent admiration for Wagner, documented in his dialogue “Richard Wagner: Reverie d’un poète français” (1926), and to realize his own counterconception of musical drama. The title of Claudel’s dialogue refers to Mallarmé’s own critical distancing from Wagner, but also to Claudel’s...
participation in Mallarmé’s soirées and to his own initiation into the Wagnerian magic at the Concerts Lamoureux in the 1880s. Together with Romain Rolland, his fellow student at the Lycée Louis le Grand, he defended with “feet and fists the Ride of the Valkyries and the religious scene of Parsifal,” as Rolland reports.25

Between Claudel’s early enthusiasm for Wagner and Christopher Columbus lay two crucial encounters with total theatre—the 1913 Hellerau productions of Claudel’s L’annonce faite à Marie and Gluck’s Orpheus, which influenced both Reinhardt and Diaghilev. Of the latter production Claudel wrote: “The performances of Gluck’s Orpheus at Hellerau were incomparable. It is the first time since the days of the Greeks that true beauty is to be seen in the theatre.”26 Equally significant was the experience of Asian theatre, in particular Kabuki and No theatre, while Claudel was ambassador in Tokyo in the 1920s. The use of music in Japanese theatre clarified for him what dramatic music meant for a dramatist as opposed to a composer, not aiming like Wagner “at the realization of a sound picture but giving impulse and pace to our emotions through a medium purely rhythmical and tonal, more direct and brutal than the spoken word,” as Claudel explained in a 1930 lecture entitled “Modern Drama and Music” at Yale University devoted to his play for the New World, Christopher Columbus.27 Against Wagner, who immerses us from the outset in a narcotic, dreamlike atmosphere, Claudel says that he and Milhaud had set out to show “how the soul gradually reaches music, . . . and how all the means of sonorous expression, from discourse, dialogue and debate, sustained by simple beatings of the drum, up to an eruption of all the vocal, lyrical, orchestral riches, are gathered in a single torrent at once varied and uninterrupted.”28 The progress of the soul to music expresses the journey to final harmony: “In such a drama music . . . is a true actor, a collective person with diverse voices, whose voices are reunited in a harmony, the function of which is to bring together all the rest and to disengage little by little, under the inspiration of a growing enthusiasm, the elements of the final hymn.”29

What separated Claudel from Wagner above all—but also connected him—was his conversion to Catholicism and commitment to a renewal of Catholic drama. In Claudel’s eyes Wagner signified the completion and exhaustion of the whole tradition of secular art since the Renaissance: “The supreme conflagration which consumes Valhalla is for me nothing other than the catastrophe of that imagination,

27. Paul Claudel, “Modern Drama and Music,” in Kirkby, Total Theatre, 202. Claudel was the French ambassador in Washington; the lecture in English at Yale University was given in connection with the American publication of Christopher Columbus.
29. Ibid., 204.
whose impotence the great man had recognized. That is why he wrote *Parsifal* after *The Ring* and called it a festival play of stage consecration”—*Parsifal* presented the programme of a new stage for a new age.\(^{30}\) And just as Wagner found inspiration for *Parsifal* in Càlléron, so Claudel makes *The Book of Christopher Columbus* into world theatre in a double sense: the play has as its theme the unification of the world in the Catholic faith, and it takes the form of the judgment of posterity and eternity on the hero, who divides on his deathbed into the spectator and the judge of his own epic quest for the New World. As in world theatre, the action takes place in time and *sub specie aeternitatis*. The sacred and profane history of Columbus is contained in “The Book,” the third testament of the unification of the earth, the gospel of Christopher Columbus, the symbolic meaning of whose name, Bearer of Christ and Ambassador of God, runs as leitmotif through the play. This Book is Claudel’s homage to Mallarmé and answer to the “catastrophe” of Mallarmé’s poetic quest to give meaning to the world, the catastrophe of the nineteenth century that culminated for Claudel in Wagner and Mallarmé.\(^{31}\) Claudel’s Book completes the world by revealing its divine meaning, just as Columbus completed the world by revealing the unity of God’s creation. Beyond that, the Book realizes Mallarmé’s dream of a fusion of Book and Theatre in a performance modeled on the office of the Mass. Claudel compares *Columbus* to a Mass in which the public through the Chorus takes a continuous part. Claudel splits Mallarmé’s poet-operator of the ceremonial reading of the Book into the figure of the Narrator-Explicator and the Chorus, which he distinguishes from the chorus of the ancient drama: “It is, rather, the Chorus which the Church, after the triumph of Christianity, invited to enter the sacred edifice to become an intermediary between the priest and the people, the one *officiating*, the other *official*. Between the speechless crowd and the drama developing on the stage—and if I may say so, on the altar—there was needed an officially constituted interpreter.”\(^{32}\) As with *Parsifal*, with Gurnemanz as narrator and its Christian (and Klingsohr’s pagan) chorus, the stage becomes altar, and the play an *auto sacramental*, framed by the opening procession and the final hymn. Preceded by soldiers and the standards of Aragon and Castile, the Book is carried onto the stage, followed by the Narrator and the increasingly disorderly Chorus. The Book is placed upon a lecturn and opened by the Narrator, who prays for God’s guidance in presenting the Book of the life and voyages of Christopher Columbus: “For it is not he alone; all men have the calling to the Other World and to this last shore, which God’s grace wishes us to attain.”

The Mass and Mallarmé’s idea of the Book thus provide the two archetypes of the theatre that structure Claudel’s renewal of world theatre. The Book allows, on the one hand, distance, commentary, and judgment on the scenes, the tableaux vivants; on the other, it embeds the earthly history of Columbus in the eternal perspective of God’s sacred history. To the coexistence of the temporal and the eternal, the profane and the sacred, corresponds the division of the action between the stage and the proscenium. Between these two levels of the play, Columbus’s life and its eternal meaning, there is a third mediating dimension, the judgment of posterity. The chorus participates in all three levels or perspectives of the world theatre. The chorus must give voice to the many roles that make music into a true actor—the inchoate and elementary obstacles that Columbus must confront and subdue, from the ground swell of the sea to the fury of the unleashed storm, from the laughter and mockery of the court and the street to the mutiny of the sailors; the responses and hymns that punctuate the reading of the Book; the call of posterity to Columbus on his deathbed to “go beyond the limit,” to cross to the other shore. The chorus thus forms, in Claudel’s words, the point of intersection or reciprocity between “the speechless crowd and the drama developing on stage.” Through the collective medium of the orchestra and the chorus, music takes and lends its voice to “that audience surrounding a great man and a great event which is composed of all peoples and all generations.” “By turns murmuring applause and issuing a challenge, the public follows all the incidents of the drama—that anonymous power that we call opinion.”

World theatre adopts the standpoint of eternity, the standpoint of omniscience, inherent in the passage to the New World. Going beyond the limit opens our eyes to a total world view, which is the condition of a resacralized, retotalized theatre. Retotalization calls in turn for a synthesis of the arts. Here Claudel is considerably more inventive than Hofmannsthal, who was content to rely on the power of a great and simple dramatic form, Reinhardt’s directing skills, music drawn from Handel’s oratorios arranged by Nilson, and the church setting. With Claudel, as we have seen, music plays a crucial role. The stage action is not only presented to the critical gaze of posterity; it also arises as a series of Apollonian dream visions from the “collective medium” of the Dionysian orchestra and chorus, “a kind of collective, anonymous roaring as of a sea.” However, the epic structure of the Book contains Greek tragedy within the higher order of Christian history: the spectacle that is generated from below is transfigured from above. In the climactic scene of part 1, the mutiny of the sailors is transformed into jubilation by the miracle of the appearance of a dove announcing land. In the climactic scene of

33. Ibid., 204.
34. Ibid., 207.
part 2, and of the play as a whole, Columbus, who is being transported to Spain in chains on the king’s orders, faces his greatest trial. Columbus’s prayers carry the ship through the first two crises of the unleashed chaos of the abyss. The third crisis, however, takes him into the eye of the storm, the deadly silence in which he must confront the accusing images of his conscience, the images of the multitudes exterminated and of the slavery that he has reestablished through his discovery of the New World. In the background the music of the chorus slowly emerges as that of De profundis: “From the depths I raise a cry to you, Lord…”

The most imaginative aspect of Claudel’s total theatre, besides the chorus, is his use of film to transform the fixed, immobile scenery into moving images to match the changing emotions and atmosphere evoked by the music, creating what a French critic called the fourth dimension of the stage. Why not, Claudel asks, “treat the scenery like a simple frame, like a conventional foreground behind which a path is open to dreams, to memory, and to imagination?”35 Thus the accusing images of Columbus’s conscience appear on the screen; a montage of scenes of Asia, camels, the palace of the Great Khan, accompany Columbus’s reading of Marco Polo as a child; in the same scene the faces of his mother and sister appear in close-up as Columbus is called to leave his family and follow his vocation. The action on stage can be repeated on the screen or vice versa: the dove that appears to the sailors appears first on the screen. Alternatively, dreams and imagination can look not inward but outward to the unfolding symbolic vista of the reunified world, a gigantic image of the globe circled by a dove. And it is only fitting that Claudel should employ for his play of the New World the new alliance of cinema and music—“movements, values, clusters of form and appearances continually decomposed and recomposed”—that America seemed destined to develop.36

Milhaud wrote three kinds of music for the play: formal music for the ceremonial scenes, popular melodies for the historical tableaux, and radical polytonality (which he had already used in the Oresteia) for those moments in which the religious mission of Columbus is manifested—the dove above the ocean, the scenes with Columbus’s patron Isabella, the storm at sea, and Isabella’s funeral cortège. However, the very success of the Berlin production indicated to Claudel that his play had been overshadowed by the music and transformed into grand opera at the expense of the text. He was able to persuade Milhaud to write a much shorter score, for thirteen musicians, using more conventional and recognizable material (religious music, popular songs) for a production by Jean-Louis Barrault in the 1950s. The original score was to be reserved for radio and concert performances.37 Claudel was not happy, however, with its concert performance as an oratorio, despite the

35. Ibid.
36. Ibid., 208.
fact that his oratorios *Joan of Arc at the Stake* and *King David*, with music by Artur Honegger, enjoyed great success and have maintained their place in the concert repertoire, unlike *The Book of Christopher Columbus.*

Brecht reportedly received a shock from the 1930 Berlin production of *Columbus.* He was engaged at the time in developing a comparable didactic theatre with his *Lehrstücke*, addressed directly to the audience, using chorus and music, and breaking through theatrical illusion as Claudel did in *Columbus* with the exchanges between chorus and narrator as to their proper role. John Willett’s call in 1960 for a proper study of the parallels between Brecht and Claudel, whom Brecht considered “an original dramatist of great stature,” still remains a desideratum, and with it the scarcely explored question of Brecht and the *Gesamtkunstwerk.*

**Theatre of Cruelty: Brecht and Artaud**

Brecht’s didactic plays, written in the final years of the Weimar Republic, grew out of the musical reaction in the 1920s to the last wave of romantic expressionism, which climaxed before World War I in the symphonic inheritors of Wagner—Strauss, Mahler, and Schoenberg. Stravinsky was the acknowledged model in the search for new forms of musical theatre: the chamber opera *Renard* and *L’histoire du soldat* (The Soldier’s Tale) (1921), with its minimalist staging and jazz influences, announced along with Diaghilev’s *Parade* the revolt against the Wagnerian idea of music drama. In France, Milhaud successfully exploited the popularity of jazz in his two ballets, *Le boeuf sur le toit* (1919) with Jean Cocteau, and *La création du monde* (1923), with scenario by Blaise Cendrars and stage sets by Fernand Léger. The combination in *La création* of primitivism, an African legend of the creation and animation of the world, and Léger’s mechanical art emphasized the interest in de-individuation. The masked, depersonalized dancers were integrated into a spectacle of color, light, signs, and effects designed to achieve a “formalistic synthesis of the mise-en-scene.”

In Germany *L’histoire du soldat* was performed at the Berlin State Opera in 1925 and again in 1928 together with the premiere of Stravinsky’s *Oedipus Rex* to a Latin text by Cocteau. The Donaueschingen Music Festival, founded by Paul Hindemith and others in 1921, became Stravinsky’s platform in Germany. The festival moved to Baden-Baden in 1927 and changed its focus, under Hindemith’s leadership, to “Gebrauchsmusik” and “Gemeinschaftsmusik”

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38. Paul Valéry collaborated with Honegger on two projects, the melodramas *Amphion* (1931) and *Semiramis* (1934). “Like Claudel, Valéry was always preoccupied with the relation of words to music. These two great masters of contemporary poetry, as different as they are otherwise, always pursued the same end: to move from the spoken word to the sung word, and finally to pure music. Likewise, for both of them, the object of their search was to bring together all the possibilities of the theatre.” *The Collected Works of Paul Valéry*, vol. 3, *Plays*, ed. Jackson Matthews (New York: Pantheon, 1960), 374.


(functional or applied music and amateur music-making). Functional music responded to the fascination with mechanical man, which invaded the European stage in the 1920s with Meyerhold’s biomechanics, Schlemmer’s *Triadic Ballet* (with music by Hindemith) and Moholy-Nagy’s total theatre experiments at the Bauhaus, and George Antheil’s *Ballet mécanique* for a film by Léger, as well as the “mass ornament” of popular entertainment and gymnastic displays.

Brecht’s didactic plays had a double aim: to find new performers and audiences outside the existing commercial and subsidized theatre and to overcome the separation between stage and public by fusing performers and audience into the one learning collective. Brecht’s didactic theatre needs therefore to be distinguished from the scientific intention of his epic theatre, which aimed to complete the secularization of the theatre, its separation from ritual, through a self-critique from within the institution. Epic theatre’s techniques of estrangement and distanciation stand at the opposite pole to the Wagnerian synthesis of the arts. As Brecht puts it in *A Little Organon for the Theatre*, “Let us invite all the arts befitting the spectacle, not in order to undertake a Gesamtkunstwerk in which each would abandon and lose itself; on the contrary, they should advance with the art of acting the common task in their own manner, and their interaction consists in their mutual distanciation” (par. 74). The learning collective outside and beyond the theatre as institution, the goal of the didactic plays, is scarcely compatible with the enlightened audience of the epic theatre. The political enlightenment intended by the didactic plays is much closer to that of a “secular” but still ritualized version of World Theatre: its hierarchy is no longer vertical-spatial but horizontal-temporal, a retotalized theatre that takes its total ideology from Communism. Identification with the Communist Party is underpinned, however, by an even more basic will to de-individuation. At the 1929 Baden-Baden festival Brecht presented a two-part concert treatment of Lindbergh’s transatlantic crossing, *Der Ozeanflug* (The Flight over the Ocean), with music by Kurt Weill, and *Das Badener Lehrstück vom Einverständnis* (The Baden-Baden Cantata of Consent), with music by Hindemith. *Der Ozeanflug* celebrates technology’s conquest of the elements. The central scene, entitled “Ideology,” expounds the credo of a “true atheist,” engaged in the liquidation of the Beyond and the expulsion of God through the destruction of misery and ignorance by workers and machines. The final chorale, which speaks in the name of the future, of the not yet attained, is repeated at the beginning of *Das Badener Lehrstück vom Einverständnis*.45

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45. This choral play/oratorio was performed in 1929 in Berlin, directed by Otto Klemperer, and in Philadelphia in 1931, under Leopold Stokowski. It was translated into English by George Antheil, whose own opera *Transatlantic* was performed in Frankfurt in 1930.
Lehrstück. The second cantata spells out the cruel lesson that the collective must incorporate if the resistance not of nature but of society is to be overcome: the total sacrifice of the self in the cause of permanent revolution. It is precisely this restitution of meaning to existence, the struggle against injustice and exploitation, that gives meaning to the death of the individual, that is, to individual death:

THE REHEARSED CHOIR:
But you, who acquiesce in the stream of things
Do not sink back into Nothingness.
Do not dissolve yourselves like salt in water, but
Rise
Dying your death as
You labored your labor
Revolutionizing your revolution. 46

The “rehearsed choir” speaks—like Claudel’s chorus—from the other side, beyond the death of the individual that is one with the constitution of the collective. The cantata has parts for two soloists (aviators), the speaker, and the choir. The choir stands at the back on a podium, with the orchestra on the left. At the front of the stage on the left is the table at which the conductor, the speaker (Hindemith and Brecht at the premiere), and the choir leader are seated, and on the right the table at which the two soloists sit. The cantata or oratorio unfolds as a liturgical rite, drawing on the austerity of the Protestant version of World Theatre, Bach’s Passions, as opposed to the Catholic magnificence of Claudel’s theatrical spectacle. The speaker directs the ritual alternation of soloists and collective like a priest. In Hindemith’s preface to the published score, the audience is regarded as participants in the performance, called upon, like a church congregation, to join in the choral passages under the direction of the choir leader. 47 The final summons of the collective to the soloists to join the ranks of the marching workers symbolizes the function of the Lehrstücke—the transformation of the audience, which could only be achieved by turning away from the existing theatre in the direction of operas for schools, as in Brecht and Weill’s Der Jasager/Der Neinsager (The Yea Sayer and the Nay Sayer), produced at the Central Institute for Education, Berlin, in 1930, or in didactic plays for workers choirs, notably Die Maßnahme (The Measures Taken) in 1930, with music by Hanns Eisler.

Brecht had no time for the myth of the representative audience. If the didactic plays aimed at rehearsing the collectivizing of the individual, it was as part of the class struggle, where the part, in possession of redemptive truth, is pitted against

society as a whole. The lesson of the struggle is total mobilization, the ultimate logic of de-individuation, of the marriage of man and machine as the Worker in war, in the factory, in the “mass ornament” of the totalitarian rally. A new theatre for the new man was Weill’s enthusiastic response to Brecht’s *Mann ist Mann* (A Man Is a Man)—a new theatre, assembled to accomplish the oldest sacred rite: human sacrifice, raised now to the level of acquiescence in self-sacrifice. The “demontage” in *Mann ist Mann* (1926) of the soldier Galy Gay, robbed of his identity and transformed into a fighting machine, through the pantomime of his mock execution and burial, demonstrates that “a man is a man.” It has a grotesque counterpart in the scene in *Das Badener Lehrstück* in which “Mr. Smith” is sawed into pieces. This interlude with three clowns, Brecht’s exercise in the theatre of cruelty, shocked the Baden-Baden audience and contributed to the political scandal of the performance, which led to the transfer of the festival to Berlin in the following year, but also to the refusal by the festival committee, including Hindemith, to include *Die Maßnahme* in the Berlin programme.

*Die Maßnahme* was the first explicitly political didactic play, which had the function, in Eisler’s words, of transforming the concert hall into a political meeting, and of realizing the revolutionary potential of “complicated polyphonic choruses, unisonic marching songs, spoken choruses, aggressive chansons and ballads.”49 The oratorio presents a (political) party court, represented by the mass choir (four hundred singers at the Berlin premiere), which investigates the conduct of four party agitators (four actors) who have killed the fifth member of their group, whose revolutionary instincts led him to commit a series of “objective” mistakes. His liquidation in the interests of the party is ratified by his recognition of his harmful conduct. The spirit of the Stalinist show trials of the 1930s is already present in Brecht and Eisler’s rehearsal.50 Since the trial is intended to demonstrate correct conduct, that is, the extirpation of all “objectively” harmful human feelings, such as compassion and anger, Brecht’s estrangement techniques come into their own. In his epic theatre they serve to divide the audience, whereas in the didactic play they serve to instill right conduct through the “alienation” of spontaneous, individual feeling in the name of cold, rational insight. Thus constituted and disciplined, the collective assents to the disciplinary measures taken.

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Brecht and Artaud, the two most influential figures of the twentieth-century avant-garde in the theatre, are rightly regarded as antipodes. Brecht’s “rational” methods

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50. This is hardly surprising since didactic play and show trial have the same model: the mock trials employed by the Red Army in the 1920s as a means of indoctrinating illiterate peasants (see chapter 11). Brecht’s informant, Tretyakov, was one of the first to disappear in Stalin’s purges.
are far removed from Artaud’s “irrationality.” Nevertheless, the extremes meet. In their pursuit of a retotalized theatre, rational-discursive and irrational cruelty have the same goal of de-individuation. What must be sacrificed in Artaud is “our petty human individuality,” which cuts us off from the inhuman source of energy that alone can renew the theatre and regenerate a sick civilization. Artaud’s significance lies of course not in a scarcely existing practice (his production of Shelley’s The Cenci in the 1920s was a miserable failure) but in his writings for a theatre to come, published in 1938 under the title Le théâtre et son double. Driven by a radical critique and rejection of Western civilization and its arts, these essays present a familiar pattern of Nietzschean cultural critique, in which decadence and regeneration go hand in hand. Here too, in line with the culturalist understanding of culture as an expressive totality, the state of the arts—above all the theatre as the public art—serves as the index of social vitality. More is at stake, however, than a rejection of modern society. Artaud’s critique of representation, contemporary with Heidegger’s dissection of “the age of the world picture,” concerns a civilization that has taken a fundamentally wrong turn. And just as Heidegger found comfort after the Second World War in Eastern thought, so Artaud drew inspiration from his encounter with Balinese theatre at the 1931 Colonial Exhibition in Paris for his quest for a ritualized theatre.

Artaud’s attack on representation stands in a tradition of cultural critique going back to Rousseau. Since Nietzsche it had become a staple of the vitalist lament over the tragedy of culture (Simmel), brought about by the fatal disjunction of life and form (Lukács), words and things (Artaud), which had led to a petrification of culture and a deep sense of alienation. Artaud calls this process of petrification or formalism “idolatry,” the worship of forms from which all life has departed. Now the gods sleep in the museum—testimony, like the congealing of living tradition into a fixed canon of masterpieces, to the entropic “idolatry of culture,” the decadence of Western art, and a final parting of ways with authentic culture. And what is decadent art? It is, of course, art that is nothing more than art, a product of modern individualism and anarchy. Even the Ballets Russes in their moment of splendor, Artaud adds, never transcended the domain of art (122): “The spiritual sickness of the West, the place par excellence where it was possible to confuse art with aestheticism, is to think that there can be painting which serves only to depict, dance which would be nothing but plastic figures, as if one had wanted to sever the forms from art, to cut their bonds with all the mystic attitudes they could take in confronting the absolute” (107).

The antithesis to the idolatrous separation of form and living force is the “theatre and its double,” for all true effigies have their double (18). The theatre of representation, by contrast, is the theatre of words, of dialogue. Words belong to the

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book, to literature, not to the stage, which demands a concrete, physical language, “poetry in space independent of articulated language” (60). If the disembodied word is emblematic of idolatry, Artaud is not thinking simply in terms of an opposition between abstract and concrete language. It is rather that representation has reduced the world to the visible, reducing thereby the essential word/sign—the symbol—to a mere shell. The theatre is robbed of its double, its shadow, when the dream image—“the hallucination which is intrinsic to all *dramatis personae*” (81)—collapses into the theatre of illusion; in Nietzschean terms, when the Apollonian dream image is no longer the projection of Dionysian forces, the product, that is, of the chorus and the community as a whole. The Western theatre of the word, which emerged in the Renaissance, marks the point at which the “supreme meaning of the theatre” started to disappear and the community to split apart into the elite and the crowd, a process completed by the early nineteenth century. If the theatre of “masterpieces” has lost contact with the crowd, it is because it has lost in its idolatry all sense of the needs of the people: “The crowd today as formerly is hungry for mystery” (118).

Mallarmé, we recall, had declared that the mystery resides in the crowd, waiting to be brought to consciousness by the word. His dematerialization of the theatre stands at the opposite pole to Artaud’s refusal of the word other than in its magical and mystic function as symbol. Here too, as in the rival claims to the legacy of Orpheus by Mallarmé and Scriabin, it is a question of orphic powers. Artaud’s Dionysian conception of theatre celebrates, like Scriabin, the mystery of the dismemberment of the god and the final return to unity. Artaud locates the origins of theatre in “the materialization or rather the exteriorization of a kind of essential drama of division and conflict” (76). “We must believe that the essential drama, that which was at the basis of all the Great Mysteries, espouses the second age of Creation, that of difficulty and of the Double, that of matter and the condensation of ideas” (77). The theatre and its double, the theatre of divine powers, summoned, named, and directed in “the true spectacle of life” (19), is the site of symbolic exchange between man and the gods, between visible forms and invisible forces. In origin and in essence, theatre for Artaud is a religious rite, a ceremony of conjuration that breaks language to touch life (19). Theatre’s regenerative function of renewing life is presented by Artaud in terms of alchemy, the plague, and cruelty.

The metaphysical drama of division and unification is compared to the Great Work of the purification of fallen matter in order to attain the divine light of which gold is the opaque symbol. This alchemical-theatrical operation of purification culminates in an absolute purity, which Artaud compares to a single note, the audible organic manifestation of an indescribable vibration (79). Both the mysteries of Orpheus and those of Eleusis partake of this alchemical theatre, which is composed of a combination of music, colors, and forms that we can no longer imagine but can perhaps recover poetically “by extracting from the principles of all the arts their communicative and magnetic potentials by means of forms, sounds, music and
volumes, evoking in passing through all the natural similitudes of images and their likenesses...states of such sharpness and intensity, so absolutely cutting that we sense through the tremblings of the music and the form the subterranean threats of a chaos as decisive as it is dangerous” (77). The alchemical theatre of Mystery, which draws on the second age of the creation of the world and its great myths, stands in need of the images that arise from the abyss, from our metaphysical fear in face of an “inhuman reality” (74)—the images and the fear that are released by the plague, by madness, crime, drugs, war, and revolt. Only such a theatre of cruelty is capable of overcoming the split between audience and stage, by seizing the whole person, the “total man” (190), that is, by reactivating the therapeutic effects of catharsis. To effect such a regeneration the theatre must employ the totality of expressive means—“music, dance, plastic forms, pantomime, mimicry, gesture, intonation, architecture, lighting and scenery”—in order to replace the frozen forms of art with living, menacing forms, which will give the old ceremonial magic a new reality in the theatre (57–58).

A theatre in possession of magical powers cannot be a theatre of representation that repeats something preexisting. It will be instituting not instituted: a theatre of creation, origin, and foundation (again we note the parallels with Heidegger’s contemporary “Origin of the Work of Art”). Through the creation of new myths, theatre is called to realize the creative circle of catharsis, communion, and community by means of a total spectacle. It will work through the combined effects of fear and purification—images of horror yielding to cosmic harmony, the principle of unity permeating all things, the universal vibration at the roots of all the arts, which manifests itself in analogy and correspondence. Above all, it will be a theatre of and for the masses, a theatre of the myths arising from “massed collectivities,” which seeks to capture something of the poetry of festivals and crowds. It will be a theatre that speaks the language of the masses: images not words, not only because the theatrical image is more powerful than words (as Le Bon insisted) but because the theatrical image (Artaud insists) is more powerful than the thing itself. As opposed to the two-dimensional cinematic image, the theatrical image possesses the magical power of true illusion, which commands belief because it possesses us with all the intensity of a dream in which our rational faculties are suspended. Immersed in a universe of tortured dream visions, reminiscent of those of Hieronymus Bosch and Matthias Grünewald, the spectator becomes the subject of a collective rite of exorcism. How such a reborn “integral spectacle,” which transgresses the limits of art, is to be realized—this is the focus of Artaud’s manifesto “The Theatre of Cruelty,” published in the Nouvelle revue française in October 1932.

For all its importance in the history of the theatre, Artaud’s manifesto is rather disappointing when it comes to stage realization. The prescription and description of the aspects composing the total spectacle—mise-en-scène; the language of words, objects, gestures, and expressions; lighting effects; costume; use of musical instruments—are perfunctory, suggestive at most. They are best thought of as
ancillary to Artaud’s rethinking of theatrical space, which sums up many of the guiding ideas of the theatre reform movement. In place of the existing division between stage and auditorium Artaud proposed a single space, such as that provided by a barn or hangar, but utilizing the architectures of certain churches and Tibetan temples. The theatrical space is to be both sacred and functional, enveloping the spectators, who are seated in the middle, which allows them to follow the surrounding action. The action develops against the backdrop of the bare, white walls from the four corners of the space, linked by galleries that allow for the horizontal and vertical movements of the actors and the action. At the very center, amid the spectators, a space serves the purpose of a periodic regrouping of the performers. The intention of this spatial organization is clear: Artaud wants to remove all barriers to direct communication with the audience through an action that envelops and “traverses” the spectator. By means of nightmarish dream visions and cathartic exorcism the dualisms of Western man are to be overcome through the reunion of body and soul in a total spectacle for the total human being. Although Artaud failed as a theatre director, his thinking about the theatre constituted the most radical attempt to break with what Derrida calls the “closure of representation,” through his refusal of the whole tradition of the stage based on the author, the voice, and the text.

Synthesis of the Arts: A Typology

In part 2 I have taken my cue from Kandinsky: his quest on the one hand for “the spiritual in art” and on the other hand the distinction he makes between the two extremely powerful tendencies in contemporary art toward analysis and synthesis respectively. As we have seen, the tendency toward unification of the arts produced a variety of theatrical experiments in response to the Wagnerian model of the total work of art. The following typology is necessarily preliminary, but it does serve to draw together the types of theatrical synthesis examined in chapters 5 through 8.

Nature I: the *organic* model, in which synthesis of the arts is achieved through the external expressive-mimetic parallelism of the arts in the theatre. The work embodies the “living represented religion” of human nature. The work as tragic music drama (Wagner).

Nature II: the *primitivist-orgiastic* model, in which the combined forces of the theatre are directed to the reunion of body and soul through the immersion of the spectator in a total spectacle. The work as ritual and magic against the spoken word, against representation (Stravinsky’s *Rite of Spring*, Artaud’s theatre of cruelty, the American Living Theatre).

Spirit: the *synaesthetic* model, in which aesthetic synthesis is achieved through internal correspondence (as opposed to the external expressive parallelism) of the arts. As the symbol of spirit, the work aims for abstraction and dematerialization as the means to totalization. The work as Mystery (Mallarmé, Scriabin, Kandinsky, Schoenberg).

Artifice: the *estrangement* model, which aims neither for a mimetic nor for a synaesthetic integration of the arts, but for a complex counterpoint that provokes a critical self-reflection of the theatre as representation. Comic-ironic distance is attained through recourse to popular, premodern forms of the theatre. Instead of fusion we have de-fusion (Stravinsky, Brecht’s epic theatre). De-fusion, however, can also serve the purposes of re-fusion (Claudel’s world theater, Brecht’s didactic plays).

To these four types we may add a fifth:

Utopia: the *futurist-constructivist* model, which presents the union of art and technology, in which for instance the formal means of the theatre and the actors are transformed into functions of “production art.” Alexander Bogdanov’s “universal organizational science” inspired the constructivist, biomechanical theatre of Tretyakov, Meyerhold, and Eisenstein in the Soviet Union, and Moholy-Nagy’s “theatre of totality” at the Bauhaus.

The emphasis on the synthesis of the arts in part 2 gives way in part 3 to an activist avant-gardism, projected into images of the total work realizing a reunion of art and life. Our fifth type, the “scientific” transcendence of the limits of art as a means to a total reconstruction of man and society (chapter 10), stands in sharp contrast to the sublime collective intoxication to be accomplished by a theatre of the people, prelude to the theatre of mass politics (chapter 9), and in even sharper contrast to the Dionysian intoxication of the battlefield embraced by d’Annunzio, Marinetti, and Jünger (chapter 11). The Italian futurist dream of a “breakthrough to totality” through the cult of the machine and of war had its fitting corollary in the will to destroy the museum. These dreams of transcending the limits of bourgeois art and the bourgeois subject are essential stages in the progression to the totalitarian work of art, which realized, through its complete fusion of art and life, the paradox inherent in Wagner’s vision of the Gesamtkunstwerk. Total realization signifies self-destruction. Wagner’s artistic programme of the sacrifice of the individual arts to the whole is replicated in life in the totalitarian programme of the sacrifice of the individual to the whole. Its ultimate image is the great sacral landscapes presided over by the eternity of death—Jünger’s vision of the world frozen into a total work of art.