The rapid industrialization of Germany during the last decades of the nineteenth century had profound implications for the Wilhelmine empire. Reactions against industrialism and materialism dominated intellectual thought. Artists, writers, philosophers, and political thinkers struggled to discover alternate directions for Germany as it entered the twentieth century. Some intellectuals advocated socialism or anarchism as alternatives to the empire. Others studied such German mystics as Meister Eckhart and Jakob Böhme for clues to a new direction. Still others turned to a study of non-Western religions - Buddhism and Hinduism - or such esoteric religions as Rosicrucianism and Theosophy. Serious artists and architects looked upon their work as instruments for transforming society and searching for a style that would effectively change the moral and ethical climate.

Expressionism was one of these styles. From the moment in 1911 when it was first described in Germany as the manifestation of a rebellion against the established forces until the early 1920s when its death knell was sounded, Expressionism was associated with a new religion of mysticism, with the cosmic, and with universalism. At first the brilliant colors and loose, painterly texture of French Fauve painting and its German variations in the works of the Brücke and the Blaue Reiter were called Expressionist. By 1912 abstraction became linked with the idea of Expressionism. Antinaturalism became equated with antimaterialism and antipositivism to such an extent that this new art was soon viewed as a means for creating a vision of a better world. Architects urged their colleagues to learn from the new painting and applied the term Expressionist to their own work. Expressionism became identified as a weltanschauung with a unique spiritual point of view. During World War I, the Expressionist absorption of other modernist styles, including French Cubism and Italian Futurism, was viewed as reflecting its synthesizing universalism.

After the war the Expressionist break with tradition was viewed as the visual symbol of utopian socialism, which represented a radical break from the former imperial government. But socialism under the Weimar Republic could not meet the utopian expectations raised by the November Revolution of 1918. Just as the ruling Social Democrats disappointed many of their followers, so too did Expressionism begin to be criticized as not being able to reach the people. Abstraction increasingly came under attack as esoteric, decorative, and without meaning. As utopian
attitudes gave way to more pragmatic ones, artists who had been linked with Expressionism moved toward a more precise style and hastened to remove suggestions of mysticism from their work. Abstract artists moved away from the amorphous styles developed before the war and toward a more geometric abstraction that related to the new emphasis on technology. Nonetheless, the utopian, universalist, even mystical orientation of Expressionism was continued during the Weimar Republic in the methodology and output of the new school for all the arts, the Bauhaus.

In 1908, the young art historian Wilhelm Worringer had published the treatise Abstraction and Empathy, in which he linked abstract styles with transcendental points of view. He subsequently connected the new directions in German art of 1911 and earlier with Parisian Synthetists and Expressionists and praised the new German art for establishing connections with "the most elementary possibilities": mysticism and the very origins of art, the primitive. Although he did not directly connect Expressionism with abstraction, he described it as overcoming the "European classical prejudice" and "the rationalistic optics of European upbringing.

Worringer gave the new art the weight of history and emphasized that its antinaturalism, distortion, and simplicity were only the beginning of a new approach to artistic creation.

The publication early in 1912 of Wassily Kandinsky's On the Spiritual in Art began the equation of abstraction, Expressionism, and mysticism in the minds of critics and the public. By the spring of 1912 works by Kandinsky and other members of the Blaue Reiter many of whom knew Worringer's writings, were being discussed under the rubric of Expressionism, and Kandinsky's work in particular was being described as the outgrowth of a theosophical program. On the Spiritual in Art links a new style of painting, abstraction, with the coming of a new utopia; the messianic tone of his book and the radical nature of his paintings contributed to the assessment that Kandinsky was "nothing less than the representative of a new idealism."

In such assessments the critics were reacting to Kandinsky's praise of Theosophy and other occult groups, to his assimilation of brilliant, painterly Fauve and Expressionist colors and textures, and to his claim that abstraction had the greatest potential for the forceful expression of cosmic ideas.

Like other intellectuals, the Russian-born Kandinsky, who had moved to Munich in 1896, interpreted his age as one dominated by a struggle between the forces of good, the spiritual, and the forces of evil, materialism. In 1911 he wrote, "Our epoch is a time of tragic collision between matter and spirit and of the downfall of the purely material worldview; for many, many people it is a time of terrible, inescapable vacuum, a time of enormous questions; but for a few people it is a time of presentiment or of precognition of the path to Truth."

Because he felt that abstraction had the least connection with the materialism of the world, he believed that abstract painting might help awaken the individual to the spiritual values necessary to bring about a utopian epoch. In his effort to involve the spectator, Kandinsky chose vivid colors, amorphous shapes floating in indeterminate space, painterly, directional brushstrokes, and remnants of apocalyptic and paradisiacal images. Geometric forms and flat patterning were too closely connected with the ornamental designs of applied art to be the basis for his paintings; geometric ornament could seem too much like a "necktie or a carpet" to be a stimulant for social change.

Kandinsky's steps toward abstraction were bolstered by his readings in mystical and occult tracts and his absorption of the antinaturalism of Symbolist and Fauve art. Like other artists and writers of the Symbolist generation, Kandinsky searched for forms that would be suggestive of "the higher realities, the cosmic orders" rather than descriptive of the mundane physical world. He believed a new interest in abstraction was being awakened, "both in the superficial form of the movement towards the spiritual, and in the forms of occultism, spiritualism, monism, the 'new' Christianity, theosophy, and religion in its broadest sense."

Although Kandinsky disliked the theorizing tendencies of the Theosophists, he praised the international theosophical movement for bringing "salvation" to many "desperate hearts" and expressed strong interest in the theosophical experiments with music and color parallels. He referred his readers to the color-music charts made by the Russian Theosophist, A. Zakharin-Unkovsky. He also recommended the writings of the leader of the German Theosophical Society, Rudolf Steiner, whose Christian theosophical teachings were of particular significance to him and other Russians living in Germany.

Steiner's presence in Munich and his belief that artistic experiences strongly stimulate the development of spiritual understanding contributed to Kandinsky's interest in him when writing On the Spiritual in Art. Kandinsky also praised the Symbolist dramatist Maurice Maeterlinck for his use of ambiguity and mystery to reflect the age's anxieties.

Symbolists and Theosophists, Maeterlinck and Steiner among them, stressed that the truths of the universe are obscured by the physical world's veil. They believed that indirect methods, not direct ones, would lead to heightened consciousness and that the process of deciphering messages would strengthen comprehension. In the preface to Theosophie Steiner warned the reader: "One cannot read this book as one is accustomed ordinarily to read books in our era.... In certain respects every page and even many a sentence will have to be 'worked out' by the reader. This has been intentionally aimed at. For only in this way can the book become to the reader what it ought to become:..."

Because Steiner believed that the unintelligible could not directly experience the cosmic worlds where colors and forms floated in space, he advised such preliminary practices of meditation as contemplating a natural object: crystal, plant, or animal. Eventually the student would begin to see things that were not visible before.

Although Kandinsky did not explicitly state that his paintings had to be "worked out," he did write that they would seem at first to be composed of "forms apparently scattered at random upon the canvas, which - again, apparently - have no relationship one to another." He explained that "the external absence of any such relationship here constitutes its internal presence." By forcing the viewer to decipher his mysterious paintings, filled with a dislocated space and ambiguous images, Kandinsky involved the viewer in the process of replacing confusion with understanding. If both content and form were too readable and the painting did not reflect the confusions of life with which people could identify, the work would not be meaningful.

Kandinsky felt that the artist and the spectator needed to become more familiar with the new universal language of abstraction. He advised that abstract forms be balanced with semiastract forms and explained that the object or image has, in addition to color and form, its own psychic effect, its own spiritual possibilities. If the physical aspects of the object were dematerialized through the process of "veiling and stripping," a "hidden construction" would be created; Kandinsky believed that image could have extraordinary
power. He looked to the Symbolist interpretation of language, which emphasized that words create a strong emotional impact if their literal meanings are disguised, for his theoretical basis. For visual examples he studied the mysterious paintings of Odilon Redon and Maurice Denis and the highly colored works of Henri Matisse, whom he described as one of the greatest living French painters.

Kandinsky sought to discover color and line equivalents for the themes of struggle and redemption so central to his world view, frequently reinforcing these themes with motifs of an apocalyptic and paradisiacal nature. He viewed his age as fraught with turmoil and believed, like Steiner and a number of Russian Symbolists, that the Revelation of Saint John the Divine contained secret keys to understanding the universe. Kandinsky chose imagery of storms, battles, angels with trumpets, and tumbling city towers for a number of major works completed between 1910 and 1913 and gave them such titles as *Deluge*, *Last Judgment*, and *Horsemen of the Apocalypse*. Although the apocalyptic motifs frequently originated in folk art depictions of the Last Judgment - Russian *lubki* and Bavarian glass paintings - and in Gothic fifteenth-century woodcuts, Kandinsky radically transformed the original motifs to make them more suggestive. When the cover design of *On the Spiritual in Art*, pl. 1, is compared with a watercolor sketch, *Sound of Trumpets*, pl. 2, the source of the curving black line on the cover can be found in the watercolor's central motif: a walled city on a mountaintop, its towers tumbling at the sound of the trumpet of Judgment Day. The transformations in the large oils based on apocalyptic motifs are even more startling: swirls of amorphous colors catch the viewer's eye, hiding the image and creating spatial dislocations at the same time.
WASSILY KANDINSKY

Study for "Composition V11." 1913
Oil on canvas
30 3/4 x 39 3/4 in.
(78 x 99.5 cm)
Städtische Galerie im Lenbachhaus, Munich

WASSILY KANDINSKY

Picture with White Border, 1913
Oil on canvas
55 1/4 x 78 3/4 in.
(140.3 x 200.3 cm)
Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York

WASSILY KANDINSKY

Study for "Picture with White Border," 1913
Watercolor on paper
10 7/8 x 14 3/4 in.
(27.5 x 37.8 cm)
Städtische Galerie im Lenbachhaus, Munich

WASSILY KANDINSKY

Study for "Picture with White Border" 1913
Watercolor on paper
11 7/8 x 9 1/8 in.
(30.3 x 23 cm)
Städtische Galerie im Lenbachhaus, Munich
V/2. 1913 (pl. 5), the golden trumpet outlined in blue in the upper right-hand corner is still quite visible. Yet the viewer must work, not only, to find the red-outlined, walled city amidst the brilliantly chaotic colors but also to experience the resolution. In Picture with White Border, 1912 (pl. 6), Kandinsky not only disguised the trumpet visible in many preparatory studies (pl. 7-8) but also hid, with billowing colors, another major motif of the battle for salvation: a Saint George figure, with extended lance, fighting the dragon of materialism.

Other Kandinsky paintings of the period relate to his utopian vision of the "new spiritual realm" that would emerge after the "terrible struggle ... going on in the spiritual atmosphere." In a watercolor called Paradise, 1911-22 (pl. 9), Kandinsky suggested the original paradise, the Garden of Eden, and the one after Redemption by using the sign of a couple with the Eve-like figure holding an apple and by using pale, amorphous colors to suggest the heavenly spheres that such Theosophists as Steiner and such poets as Paul Scheerbart had described as filled with floating pastel colors. In Improvisation II, 1912 (pl. 10), three couple motifs, which can be seen more clearly in the study (pl. 21), warm yellow-orange pastel colors in the center of the painting, and the use of the subtitle Garden of Love, evoke the theme of paradise. Contemporary Dionysian beliefs in the transcendence of sexual love, including those espoused by Stanislaw Przybylszewski, Erich Gutkind, and A. S. Merezhkovsky, also influenced Kandinsky's depictions of paradise. A number of large paintings, including Black Spot I (see p. 142) and Improvisation 28, done between 1910 and 1913-26 have motifs of destruction, primarily derived from the Last Judgment paintings, on one side of the canvas and motifs of paradise, usually represented by images of a couple, on the other side. This arrangement reinforces Kandinsky's belief that redemption emerges from struggle.

A few works of 1913 and 1914 Kandinsky tried to suggest a heavenly paradise without employing recognizable motifs. Instead he used color to signify themes and define space. In Light Painting, 1913 (pl. 12), he again used the colors of the watercolor Paradise, arranging them so that they advance and recede to
Kandinsky had written that although flatness was one of the first steps away from naturalism in painting, the artist had to go beyond this superficial approach to destroy the tactile, material surface of the canvas. He advised the construction of an ideal picture plane not only by using color but also by using a linear expansion of space through the "thiness or thickness of line, the positioning of the form upon the surface, and the superimposition of one form upon another." Light Painting reflects all these processes.

Kandinsky's interest in creating the illusion of a new kind of space on the flat canvas coincided with a burgeoning fascination among artists with the concept of the fourth dimension. The French critic Guillaume Apollinaire had explained in 1911 that "the fourth dimension represents the immensity of space externalized in all directions at a given moment. It is space itself, or the dimension of infinity." In Russia a number of artists and poets interpreted the fourth dimension as a metaphor for a new elevated consciousness that would lead mankind to utopia. When Kandinsky had to leave Germany for his native Russia at the outbreak of World War I, he came into closer contact with artists espousing these views. The creation of a new dimension in painting became a crucial goal for Kandinsky when he returned to Germany in 1921 and was confronted with the "Guhahn" of Expressionism and abstraction.

Other intellectuals before the war sought utopian political solutions to the problems brought on by the excessive materialism of the Wilhelminian emperors, but Kandinsky considered political solutions to be on a lower level and less effective than spiritual or transcendental ones. He did, however, have a certain respect for anarchism; he attacked those 'liberals and progressives' who denounced anarchism, explaining that 'they knew nothing save the terrifying name.' A number of artists and writers were fascinated by anarchism at that time: many were also advocates of internationalism, religious utopias, and mysticism. Steiner, for example, before he became involved with Theosophy around 1900, had close contacts with various socialists and anarchists, particularly among the Friedrichshagen group, where the mystic-socialist Gustav Landauer had lived. Kandinsky would have been aware of anarchist theories espoused by Landauer and the Russian writer Lev Tolstoy. In an exchange of letters with Gustav Landauer, who had met with Kandinsky and other anarchist pacifists in June 1914, Kandinsky wrote about the organization of an international group to work against war. In Russia in 1919 he referred to his earlier interest in breaking down barriers between nations but recalled that many German artists and intellectuals "were outraged by the anarchist idea." After the Russian revolution Kandinsky was involved for a period with the new government and urged an international collaboration of artists. He believed painting for moving toward abstract art and was inspired by its beauty. This vision had a dramatic impact on the conditions in Russia led him to return to Germany in 1920.

While Kandinsky was in Russia his name remained known in Germany because his work was so frequently cited as exemplifying the transcendentalism of Expressionism. The German avant-garde and the public could see Kandinsky's paintings and graphics at exhibitions organized by his dealer Hermann Walden at the Sturm Gallery in Berlin. For young artists interested in modern art, Walden's gallery became a place to visit. Poets, writers, critics, architects, musicians, and dramatists, indeed the cultural world of Berlin, frequented the gallery. An entire generation learned about Expressionism and abstraction from Walden's publications and catalogues of Der Sturm. Taut urged architects to use contemporary materials—glass, iron, and concrete—in designs that would "intensify" spiritual feelings. He worked with other artists to create a temple to art. Just before the outbreak of the war, at the Deutsche Werkbund exhibition in Cologne, Taut collaborated with Scheerbart on a glass pavilion where colored glass and Scheerbart's mystical inscriptions evoked a meditative atmosphere. Scheerbart's aphorisms reflected both men's mystical faith in color and light. Light was to penetrate the whole cosmos and be alive in the crystal.

Since the 1890s Scheerbart had associated with a number of Theosophists, and his descriptions of the colored light of astral planes reflect not only theosophical writings but also Eastern mysticism and an understanding of the German mystics Böhme and Meister Eckhart. Other Theosophists such as Steiner praised Scheerbart's ability to uncover hidden meanings through his use of words. In the years before 1914 Scheerbart associated with numerous figures of both the literary and artistic avant-garde, including Alfred Kubin, a member of Kandinsky's Blaue Reiter group. Taut is reported to have met Scheerbart in 1912 when he was involved with renovations for the building in which the Sturm exhibitions took place. Scheerbart viewed architecture as a fantastic art that would transform man's ethical and spiritual sensibilities through a meditative process inspired by its beauty. This vision had a significant influence on Taut and through Taut on Walter Gropius and the formation of the Bauhaus. Kandinsky's "similar call for artists to work together to build a monumental work of art" contributed to Taut's admiration of Kandinsky's art.

Others besides Taut and critics from Walden's circle wrote about Kandinsky's abstraction in connection with Expressionism. The publication of Paul Fechter's book Expressionismus (1914) ensured Kandinsky's reputation as a leading Expressionist painter. Fechter praised Expressionism for communicating the essence of human existence. He differed from Walden and other defenders of Expressionism who viewed it as part of an international drive against materialism. Instead he emphasized that Expressionism grew out of an ancient...
Germanic tradition: the need for metaphysics. He discussed two directions within Expressionism—by praising Max Pechstein for using aspects of nature to evoke a her state and Kandinsky for moving away from nature to evoke the transcendental, stressed that both Pechstein and Kandinsky rejected the classical Renaissance tradition in favor of the communal, metaphysical tradition of the Gothic. In contrast the Austro-Hungarian Hermann Bahr described Expressionism as related to the anxiety and anguish of life. In 1915, he wrote:

was there a time shaken by such terror by dread of death. Never was the world so silent as it is now. Never was man so small. Never was he afraid. Never was joy so far and freedom so near. Man cries for his soul, the time is a single scream of distress. Art too pro the deep darkness, she cries for help, she for the spirit. That is Expressionism.

Worringer as his guide, Bahrs concept of the 'violations' of the world of appearance and the works of Kandinsky, Oskar Kokoschka, and others to Martin Buber's and others' views of the 'invisible world.'

Pechstein and others were moving away from the external world. The Expressionists' tendency to abandon the local color of an object was Masaccio to Hartlaub of their ability to reflect elements such as the colors of the worlds, of the astral planes, in their paintings. He emphasized that the artists he most likely did not practice Metaphysics, but he pointed out the parallels between Worringer's animal paintings and his experiences of ethereal and astral life. He also referred to the auras in Max Klee's and Kokoschka's portraits, the paintings of Paul Klee and rich with 'the astral world of and emphasized that Kandinsky's paintings reflected the basic elements of the universe, air and earth.' Hartlaub that contemporary painting and as it had developed in Germany were leading to a new under-standing of the world, "opening in modern man the vision of an immense reintegration of long lost archetypes of mystical forms of thought and experience."

Hartlaub attacked the association of Expressionism with German medieval mysticism: he maintained that the two periods were very different and that the Expressionist use of color and nonperspectival space revealed a completely different consciousness from the medieval one. Coming out of a Rosicrucian tradition and interested in the Christian theological teachings of Steiner, Hartlaub was eager to stress the parallels between Steiner's ideas and the new art and not its connections to mystical thought, which he felt were no longer vital.

After the war Hartlaub rejected his earlier linkage of Expressionism, abstraction, and Steiner's Theosophy. But others, writing after the events of the November Revolution helped to establish the Weimar Republic, continued to associate Expressionism with a religious revolution. The art historian Eckhart von Sydow was one of those who identified the religious fervor of Expressionism as mystically inspired, and he described its dominant form and content as abstract Expressionism. In an essay written for the radical Dresden periodical Neue Blätter für Kunst und Dichtung, von Sydow tied Expressionism to the activist, socialist forces of the period. He thought that medieval mysticism had been otherworldly, whereas the mysticism of Expressionism was dualistic, embracing both the spiritual and the earthly. Like Pechstein he saw two directions of Expressionism: one, more general and universal, he called abstract Expressionism or the absolute, and the other connected to a passionate intensification of natural events, he called esoteric or baroque Expressionism.

Von Sydow emphasized that the religion of the Expressionist was a universalism, international one that embraced all religions. He quoted from the writings of Kandinsky and Marc to reinforce his point that "the current modernism" was permeated with a transnational spirituality. Because Germany had become a republic with the Social Democrats in control and many young artists were looking to the Soviet Union as the embodiment of utopia, von Sydow tried to establish the international heritage of Expressionism by referring to the German and Russian nationalities of the early Expressionist leaders of the Blaue Reiter. The radical young artists emerging after the war did look to Russia for artistic direction. For example, the artist Oskar Schlemmer wrote: "Moscow is said to be flooded with Expressionism. They say Kandinsky and the moderns are splashing whole quarters with color, using blank walls and the sides of houses as the surfaces on which to paint modern pictures." Von Sydow also carefully disassociated Expressionism from capitalism, an indication of his hope that the Weimar Republic would free society not only from materialism but also from capitalism and nationalism. The utopian expectations of the earlier Expressionists to rid the Earth of materialism and transform values were now being affixed to a political system with similar messianic fervor.

During the first few months after the November Revolution, before disillusionment set in, other artists and critics linked Expressionism, mysticism, socialism, and abstraction. The critic Herbert Kühn proclaimed that Expressionism, "the transformation of the spirit," reflected the same attitudes as socialism: "The same outcry against matter against the unspiritual against machines, against centralization, for the spirit, for God, for the human in man." Both desired "humaneness, unity of the spirit, freedom, brotherhood of the pure human" and despised "the border-post insanity, chauvinism, nationalism." Although Kühn insisted that Expressionism was not a style, he cited 1910 as the year in which the revolution in art began, and he listed Pablo Picasso and Kandinsky as advancing the cause of the new art.

The high expectations surrounding the new art were soon to become a source of disappointment, and before long both the Social Democrats and the Expressionists were attacked. In 1919 the murders of the radical left Spartacists leaders Karl Liebknecht and Rosa Luxemburg were a major factor in discrediting the Social Democrats. Because of the initial connection between Expressionism and the Weimar Republic, Expressionism was also discredited. The major critique was that it was too metaphysical, too removed from the world in both its form and content.

Wilhelm Haueisen, who had been one of the major supporters of Kandinsky and Expressionism, attacked Expressionism in 1919 for "esoteric formalism" and declared that the movement "was dead." Less than a year later Kasimir Edschmid declared the "cosmic wallpaper" quality of much
Expressionist painting and graphics. As many artists and critics became increasingly radical in their politics, they rejected art they felt was too remote from their everyday activities. One critic of the Expressionist posters for the National Assembly elections pointed out that these posters could not be effective because people would need an education to understand the meaning of the exaggerated lines and color.

Artists associated with Dada were particularly severe in attacking Expressionism, even though a year or two earlier they had identified with it. In their manifesto, written primarily by Richard Hülsenbeck, the Dadaists said no to Expressionism and dismissed abstraction as "pathetic gestures which presuppose a comfortable life free from conflict and strife." The Dadaist Georg Grosz, influenced by the extreme left's insistence that art should have a direct involvement with the world, attacked Expressionism with even greater disdain than Hülsenbeck. Grosz declared that it was no longer a question of "conjur[ing] up on the canvas colorful, Expressionist soul tapestries" and claimed that "the reality and clarity of engineer's drawings" were better teachers than the "uncontrolled twaddle from the cabala, metaphysics, and holy ecstasy.

During the postwar period Expressionism was not only attacked by various leftist groups. Critics such as Hartlaub began to call for a return to the object on the grounds that art should have a direct involvement with the world, attacked Expressionism with ever greater disdain than Hülsenbeck. Grosz declared that it was no longer a question of "conjur[ing] up on the canvas colorful, Expressionist soul tapestries" and claimed that "the reality and clarity of engineer's drawings" were better teachers than the "uncontrolled twaddle from the cabala, metaphysics, and holy ecstasy.

The rightists and the nationalists also used the link with mysticism and internationalism to attack Expressionism and abstraction. Never was this more evident than in the battle waged in the Thüringer State Assembly over the funding of the Bauhaus, its new school for the arts in Weimar. Newspaper accounts in late 1919 and 1920 reported how the Bauhaus was criticized for following the "false path of Expressionism." Its director, Gropius, was said to be "full of philosophic, metaphysical, and mystical thoughts," which were sarcastically explained as being part of the Expressionist aim of "deepening the being." The same journalist derogatorily insinuated that the "mystic-philosophical" community of the Bauhaus was related to freemasonry.

The Bauhaus, which had opened in April 1919, was a prominent example of the utopianism so prevalent in the first few months of the Weimar Republic. Stimulated by the widespread enthusiasm for new forms of social organization, a new school where all artists, regardless of class, background, would build together a "cathedral of the future" that would change all aspects of man's environment. In the first pamphlet announcing the Bauhaus goals, Gropius chose to write to painters, sculptors, architects to "desire, conceive, and create a new structure of the future... which will one day rise toward heaven from the hands of a million workers like the crystal symbol, a new faith... For the Bauhaus program, Gropius chose a Lyonel Feininger woodcut of a crystalline, faceted cathedral flanked by heavenly stars (photo). Gropius's choice of name Bauhaus, from the medieval word Baubau, with its reference to artisans' guilds and secret lodges, reinforced connotations of a medieval communal society.

For the Bauhaus basic staff Gropius turned primarily to painters who shared his proselytizing view of art and whose work belonged to the abstract, transcendental branch of Expressionism. With the exception of Gerhard Marcks, the major early instructors, Johannes Itten, Muche, and eventually Kandinsky - shared Gropius's pian vision of transforming society through architectural and educational reform. Gropius was aware that these instructors would be criticized for their internationalism, their political views, and their connection with Expressionism. When he wanted to appoint Klee and Schlemmer to the staff, Gropius had to write to Edwin Redlbö, minister of culture, for assistance in dealing with the new government's fears that the two Swiss-born
artists were "more wildly expressionistic than the artists already present." During the Bauhaus's first few years Gropius referred to the times as part of a catastrophic period of world history in which much misery and privation had to be endured before "spiritual and religious ideas" would find their "crystalline expression" in a great "cathedral [shining] its light into [the] smallest things of everyday life." In a speech given at the Bauhaus in July 1919, Gropius reminded the students that they were part of a "secret lodge" that would help work out a "new, great world idea."

Gropius's views were influenced to a great extent by Taut. They had known each other before the war, when both were members of die Deutsche Werkbund. Immediately after the November Revolution, Taut and Gropius formed an artists' council based on the Soviet model, the Arbeitsrat für Kunst (Work Council for Art) was intended to unite art and the people by reforming art education, organizing more accessible exhibitions, and bringing together all the arts to build a great temple to the future. Although in February 1919 Gropius took over the directorship of the council, raising money, arranging meetings, and continuing to be listed as director even when he was called to Weimar, Taut's theories are thought to have dominated the formulation of the Arbeitsrat program. For years Taut had advised architects to learn from such painters as Kandinsky that methods could assist in the creation of an ideal communitarian society. The monumental, colored-glass temples of a future that he envisioned rising over small, decentralized communities are a testament to his faith in the transcendent power of abstract color and reflect his absorption of Scherbecker's vision of a cosmic world filled with color forms. In his description of the great temples of the future in The Dissolution of the Cities (1920), he called a parable for the "third millennium."

Taut advocated the combination of colored glass and music to create a meditative environment in which individuals would become one with their group and ultimately with the universe. Taut's drawings (pl. 14) combine amorphous colors, curving lines, and words to suggest the illusion of the temples merging with the light into [the] smallest things of everyday life. Taut's optimism of the time, Molzahn was attracted to the radical politics of the Spartacists. When the Spartacist leaders were murdered, Molzahn's memorial in oil bore a trinitarian title, The Idea - Movement - Struggle; the dedication "to you Karl Liebknecht" was later painted over. Although Molzahn lived in Weimar, he never joined the Bauhaus faculty. He did contribute a graphic work to the third Bauhaus print portfolio and is reported to have recommended other young artists such as Muche for appointment to the school. Muche, who arrived in Weimar in April 1920, another artist whose quest for metaphysical truths led him to a painterly abstract form of Expressionism.
Muche had become aware of the group of artists around the Sturm Gallery when he attended an exhibition of the anthroposophically inspired painter Jacoba van Heemskerck in March 1913. He began working at the gallery as Walden’s exhibition assistant and displayed paintings there early in January 1916. By September Muche had become an instructor in the newly founded Sturm Art School. He admired the works of Kandinsky, Marc, and other members of the Blaue Reiter. His paintings of 1916, some with biblical titles, such as And the Light Parted from the Darkness (pl. 18), and others with titles descriptive of the shapes used, such as Painting with Open Form, resemble in their textured use of amorphous colors Kandinsky’s paintings of 1913 as Red Spot (pl. 13). In a 1917 book on Der Sturm, Muche was praised along with Kandinsky for dispensing with objects and using only colors and forms to create “absolute painting.” It was during this period that Muche met Itten, with whom he would develop a close friendship at the Bauhaus, and Molzahn and first became involved with the teachings of the Mazzarznan sect. His fiancée, Sophie van Leer, another of Walden’s assistants, reportedly introduced him to the theories and practices of this esoteric philosophy.

After the war Muche’s interest in mysticism intensified as he moved away from Sturm and Expressionism. A number of letters written in 1919 indicate that the year was one of crisis for him. In one letter to Ernst Hademan he criticized Berliners for their materialism and superficiality but praised the Sturm circle for their “honest passion” about Expressionism. In another letter to van Leer he complained that he felt alone and had found only one other student, Paul Citroen, with whom he could discuss Mazzarznan and other “religious things”; he was torn between his enjoyment of color in his painting and his search for “divine truths” and his sensual delight as an abstract painter and his originality in organizing the preliminary course that all students had to take as their introduction to the school.

Like Muche, Itten had been acquainted with the Expressionist circles around Walden and had exhibited at the Sturm Gallery in the spring of 1916. He remembered attending the First Autumn Salon in Berlin in 1913, where he saw the works of Marc and Kandinsky. Also in the fall of 1913 Itten began studying with the Swiss painter Adolfo Hölzel, through whom he met Schlemmer. Itten’s teaching of the Mazdaznan sect. His fiancée,
Interest in and experimentation with abstraction intensified during 1915 and 1916. He explained in a letter to Walden that his paintings would become closer to "primary matter" through his search for crystalline shapes, referred to the crystal as "fermenting mother’s milk." He, like Scheerbart, used the crystalline metaphor to convey his own commitment to communicating spirituality through the purest means.

In Resurrection (1916, pl. 20), Itten simplified figurative and landscape motifs to flattened geometric shapes. The figure that appears with a cross in the center of the study for Resurrection (pl. 20) is no longer visible within the elongated, flat triangle that dominates the center of the painting. To convey the sensation of ascent so crucial to the meaning of Resurrection, Itten placed the smallest point of the triangle close to the bottom of the painting and used a number of diagonal and circular accents to convey an upward motion. For Itten, conveying the feeling of movement in painting would continue to be a crucial theme during later years (pl. 22). He explained that movement was evocative of vitality, of life: "But movement, movement must be in an artwork. Everything living, existing lives, that is, it is in movement."

In the fall of 1916, Itten moved to Vienna, where he remained until he was invited by Gropius to teach at the Bauhaus. During his Vienna period he read Indian philosophy and grew interested in theosophical teachings to which Gropius’ first wife, Alma Mahler, is said to have introduced him. In 1918 he noted that he found Thought-Forms (1903) by Annie Besant and Charles W. Leadbeater in a
theosophical bookstore, and after comparing their charts with his paintings he was impressed by their color equations. Itten was interested in a wide variety of mystically inspired writers, including Böhme (pl. 23). At the Bauhaus, however, Mazdaznan principles of purification and regeneration were central to his life and painting.

Schlemmer, appointed to the Bauhaus in December 1920, reported: “The Indian and oriental concept is having its heyday in Germany. Mazdaznan belongs to the phenomenon... The western world is turning to the East, the eastern to the West. The Japanese are reaching out for Christianity, we for the wise teachings of the East. And then the parallels in art. The goal and purpose of all this? Perfection? Or the eternal cycle?” After Itten and Muche attended a Mazdaznan congress in Leipzig, Itten tried to convert much of the school to the dietary and meditative principles of this esoteric group. Schlemmer wrote that the congress had convinced Itten that “despite his previous doubts and hesitations, this doctrine and its impressive adherents constituted the one and only truth.” Itten created a crisis at the Bauhaus with his insistence on following these principles. Schlemmer explained that it was not the conversion of the student cafeteria to vegetarianism but Itten’s favoritism toward students who followed Mazdaznan ideology that split the Bauhaus into “two camps.” This was one of the major issues that eventually led to Itten’s resignation from the Bauhaus in the fall of 1922.

While Itten was at the Bauhaus, he created a very distinctive persona. His shaved head, monk’s robe (pl. 24), and the very intensity of his methods both attracted and repelled students. His insistence on meditation exercises before working, his urging students to feel a certain movement before they drew it, his exploration of free abstract drawing, and his emphasis on experimenting with unusual materials affected not only the instruction at the Bauhaus but much of art education since that period. Some of Itten’s exercises can be traced back to his studies with Holzel and to reform theories in education, but Itten was also greatly influenced by mystical practices. The process of releasing the student’s innate energies and feelings into art was a liberating methodology. The preparatory breathing, basic movement exercises, and rhythmic stroking of the brush helped the student’s hand follow directly the impulses of the mind. The numerous free abstract drawings (pl. 25) found among Bauhaus student portfolios are indicative of Itten’s influence.

In several prints and notebooks Itten left visual testimony to what he felt was the positive impact of Mazdaznan principles. In the print Dictum, 1921 (pl. 26), Itten used words and amorphous shapes to create a colorful tribute to Dr. Otoman Hanish, the modern founder of the Mazdaznan sect, and to the urination and hope that Mazdaznan principles could bring to the individual. The words greeting, heart, love, rope, and heaven are set in flowing, cursive script against a background of floating, colorful shapes. Itten’s spiral sculpture made of colored glass, the Tower of Fire, 1919-20 (pl. 27), stood outside his studio and is but one mark of the Bauhaus artists’ faith that they were working to create a cathedral of the future.

When Kandinsky arrived at the Bauhaus in June 1922, Gropius’s emphasis had changed. He had been defending the Bauhaus against attacks from numerous directions, including assertions that all Bauhaus students were communists, foreigners supported by state
money, mystical Expressionists, or wild bohemians. Gropius had become especially concerned with the divisions within the Bauhaus, particularly the cliques created by Itten's excessive adherence to Mazdaznan principles. In a February 1922 circular to the Bauhaus instructors Gropius warned against "wild romanticism" and stressed that they should not cut themselves off from the outside world and cultivate excessive isolation. \[^{114}\]

Gropius had become convinced that it was necessary to provide some independent financing for the Bauhaus and had begun to urge that creative work be associated not only with craft design but also with industrial design. Schlemmer characterized the change as "turning one's back on utopia": "Instead of cathedrals, the 'Living Machine.' Repudiation of the Middle Ages and of the medieval concept of craftsmanship . . . replaced by concrete objects which serve specific purposes.\[^{114}\] He prophesied that Kandinsky would fill Itten's place for Gropius.\[^{106}\] Despite Gropius's call for art to relate to technology, he did not repudiate his original insistence that the fine arts and design were the foundation of all Bauhaus courses. Kandinsky's interest in abstraction continued at the Bauhaus, but his choice of the forms robe used in an abstract painting changed radically. He also moved away from Expressionism but not from the idea that art should transform values in the service of utopian goals.

Kandinsky was very sympathetic with Gropius's original plans for the Bauhaus. In 1919, while living in the Soviet Union, Kandinsky had stressed his commitment to forming an international art society, where artists from different disciplines and nations could work together for egalitarian goals. He not only praised the Arbeitsrat für Kunst, citing Taut and Gropius, but also gave special attention to "the new Weimar Academy," where painters, sculptors, and architects blended "into one whole the element of all three arts.\[^{707}\] Kandinsky lived in Berlin for a short period before he moved to Weimar and probably heard the discussions about the death of Expressionism and the criticisms of the Bauhaus. For example, Theo van Doesburg denounced the Bauhaus for "mixing Expressionist hysteria with a half-baked religious mystique, and elevating it to a dogma (Mazdaznanism).\[^{708}\] Such outbursts must have been troubling to Kandinsky, who continued to link Expressionism and abstraction as late as 1922.\[^{709}\] Moreover, in his program for the Institute of Artistic Culture in
Moscow, Kandinsky had called for the study of occult sciences and supersensory experiments to reinforce research on the interrelationships of color, sounds, and smells. In Weimar, Kandinsky continued to believe his work would bring about the "Epoch of the Great Spiritual," but he aimed to disassociate his art from the criticism that abstraction was merely a "pathetic gesture" or "cosmic swirls." Instead of using the amorphous shapes and painterly textures that were associated with Expressionism, he worked with precisely drawn geometric forms. He had begun to experiment with such forms in Russia; the exposure to the theories and works of Kazimir Malevich, Ivan Kliun, and other members of the Russian avant-garde contributed to his growing belief that geometric forms could become a universal language for abstraction.

At the Bauhaus Kandinsky changed aspects of his style, but he did not turn away from his mystical and utopian goals. He continued to experiment with different methods to create the illusion of cosmic infinity on the flat plane of the canvas. He had begun this process before the war, and his exposure to the avant-garde in Russia reinforced his use of space as a metaphor for a utopian world.

Malevich, Mikhail Matiushin, and other artists emphasized that the illusion of space on the canvas could be a sign for the fourth dimension, one of their metaphors for the transcendent consciousness necessary for the perception of a new world.

During his Bauhaus period he frequently used precise circular forms in his paintings. In Circles within a Circle, 1923 (pl. 28), Kandinsky played off one dimension against another by contrasting the central, large, flat, black circle with smaller, slightly modeled circles, placed at angles to the picture plane. The diagonal rays of beige and gray, larger at the bottom and smaller at the top, further convey the sensation of depth.

Kandinsky continued to experiment with spatial illusions when the Bauhaus moved from Weimar to Dessau. In Several Circles, 1926 (pl. 29), he used a dark rather than a light background to create a sense of "indefinable space." The colors and sizes of the several circles create a tension and movement as the small purple orbs appear to come forward and float against the black background, suggesting a chart of star clusters similar to the one that Kandinsky included in his second treatise on abstraction, Point and Line to Plane. This was published by the Bauhaus in 1926 and is less didactic and more analytical than On the Spiritual in Art. But again Kandinsky discussed the problem of dematerializing the picture plane, urging the artist to transform it into a sensation of indefinable space, so that the spectator might experience the extension of "the dimension of time."

Kandinsky may have turned to geometric forms and away from the vague shapes associated with Expressionist cosmic visions, but he did not abandon his underlying mystical belief in the power of color and line to evoke
transcendent states. In the preliminary Bauhaus course he continued his earlier synesthetic experiment of relating color and form to universal emotional equivalents. Because he felt that color and form were interrelated, Kandinsky had his students arrange colors in connection with geometric shapes. He also emphasized that entire compositions could have universal equivalents; compositions leading the eye upward could seem light, those directing the eye downward could seem heavy and oppressive. He even went so far as to equate the upper portion of the canvas with heaven and the lower part with earth. Although he warned that these explanations were metaphoric, his choice of words clarifies to some degree the complex orientation of his paintings.

Kandinsky had been associated with reform in Soviet art education, and although he stood apart from the Constructivists by continuing to believe in easel painting, his connection with the Soviet avant-garde as well as his dignified demeanor and his calm certainty brought his pronouncements on color and form correspondences wider acceptance than Itten's. Even as Gropius lashed out at "wild romanticism" and escapism and sought to combine art and technology in his attempt to have industry underwrite Bauhaus projects, he continued to let Kandinsky run one of the preliminary courses that all students were required to take. Gropius, the pragmatic administrator, never lost his faith in the power of the fine arts to affect all design. The essence of Expressionism - the utopian belief in art's potential to transform humanity, the faith in the interrelationship of the arts, and the equation of antinaturalism and abstraction with purity and spirituality - persisted at the Bauhaus. The search for transcendence through art continued to prevail.