

Life and Death from Babylon to Picasso: Carl Einstein's Ontology of Art at the Time of *Documents*

Sebastian Zeidler

Minor revisions aside, this essay is based on a talk I delivered at the *Documents* conference hosted by the Courtauld Institute, London, in June 2006, and in an expanded version at the University of Chicago later that year.¹ Given my speaking time, I was faced with the stark choice of either describing a small number of trees or of tracing the outlines of a map, however sketchy, of the forest that was the mind of the art critic and historian Carl Einstein. In both those talks and this essay I have chosen a mix of the two: I will make some general observations about the frame of that mind, because that seems far more useful as an introduction for those who are unfamiliar with Einstein's work; and also because even among those who have tried to engage it, a sense of befuddlement prevails regarding what, ultimately, Carl Einstein was all about.

By way of answering that question I will touch on some of the essays Einstein published in the pages of *Documents* proper, but also a number of related texts that are at least as important: the third edition of *The Art of the 20th Century*, his survey of contemporary art (1931); the 'monograph' he published in 1934 on *Georges Braque*; and the extensive notes from his Paris period (1928-1940) that are preserved in his estate and partly published in his posthumously collected works. I will range this widely — the datable material I cite was published between 1928 and 1934, and the issues I discuss extend from the art of Mesopotamia to Picasso's surrealism, from Freud's psychoanalysis to Mauss's ethnography — precisely for sake of *clarity*. The puzzlement that continues to greet Einstein's work is to a large extent caused by the fact that his thought consists of three inextricable strands: philosophy, art history, and contemporary art criticism; strands so inextricable, in fact, that they will constantly encroach upon one another — such that an essay on Analytic Cubism will be prefaced by a methodological rejection of neo-Kantian-style art history, followed by a rejection in turn of the naturalistic art of classical antiquity, an endorsement of the austere simplicity of Egyptian sculpture, and a celebration, finally, of Cubism circa 1912 in terms that are partly owed to the philosophy of Henri Bergson, partly to the art history of Heinrich Wölfflin, and partly to recent ethnography. All this, and more, in nine pages of *Documents*.²

Such discursive density is fascinating or frustrating, depending on where one is coming from; in any case it means that when trying to excavate the intellectual framework that generated it, reading Einstein text by text in chronological or ostensibly thematic order is often futile. And so, in what follows I will attempt first to disentangle and then reassemble, however schematically, the strands of philosophy, art history and criticism in his thought. In the process I will move from the abstract to the concrete, and, in due course, I will end up talking about actual works of art.



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Carl Einstein's art historical and art critical project at and around the moment of *Documents* was powered by a more fundamental philosophical project; and in order to get a grip on the former we need to understand at least the bare bones of the latter — the bare bones of his ontology: his philosophy of being, or of what he called the *real*. And in order to understand it in turn, it will be helpful to begin with a heuristic fiction, and argue that it unfolds on two closely related levels.

On the first level, there is the world in its immanence: a network of forces modelled on Nietzsche's *Will to Power*, Ernst Mach's fabric of functions, and the scintillating kaleidoscopic becoming described in the work of Bergson; an immanence that is inhabited not by conscious, rational *subjects* and their re-presentations *of* the real, but rather by pre- or non-rational *subjectivities* and their functional interactions *with* the real.³ On the second level, there are the conscious efforts made by humans at relating *to* this real, at locating themselves within it, and at rendering sensible such locating by means of human-made objects called, for example, works of art or of philosophy. Just like the subjects who produce them, these works are distinct from whatever else populates the real by what we might call their double imbrication with it. Even as philosophical concepts or artworks are immersed *within* the immanence of the real, they also arise *from* it as so many selective, invested, perspectivist interpretations *of* it — interpretations which, depending on the historically specific agenda of the interpreter, will sometimes deny — and thereby in effect *diminish* — the very existence of the real out of which they so emerged. Subject formation will be accompanied by the renunciation of subjectivity: such is the tempting option for humans.

Einstein summarised why they should be so tempted, and partly how they would go about it, in an undated note from the 1930s:

[T]he *petrification of the world and of being* is one of our primary tendencies; that is, the struggle against death, against a massive movement that signifies life yet whose energy surpasses our own. Against this tremendous, vital movement of the world we oppose the repetition of our actions, of ritual, memory, abstraction, style: an arrestment (a barrier) by means of which we seek to inhibit and slow down this movement of the world; a means by which [...] we compose and impose structures.⁴

The first thing to observe about this quotation is how here a Bergsonian philosophy of the real as becoming is both invoked *and* crucially complicated: by the sinister presence of death. To say that the phenomenal world is ever becoming and as such is 'a massive movement that signifies life,' yet to add in the same breath that this, its interminable processuality, poses a deadly threat,



is to insist, against all naïve vitalisms, on what Einstein elsewhere calls *Weltzwang*, the 'equally deadly and vital compulsion of the world.'⁵ The doubly vital and deadly power of the real is such that the very movement of its becoming, simply by unfolding, will cause finite human subjects to emerge within itself; but it is also such that it will subsequently overwhelm them with the onslaught of its formless sensory richness and over time turn against and eventually kill them.

The compulsion of the world is not the compulsion to death, however; it is rather the compulsion to a *decision* in face of this, the world's deadly vitality. Given the 'unignorable' fact that we are living insofar as we are 'continuously dying': will we yield without a fight to this becoming that brings death to the very life it spawns, and be absorbed by its flux? Will we, on the contrary, seek to flee from its immanence into an airless transcendental sphere of our own invention and embrace there a being without life? Or will we finally accept our own becoming towards death *within* the real, take up the challenge, and actively engage in its transformation? These are the three ontological choices in the face of *Weltzwang* that Carl Einstein mapped out in his philosophy of being and in the theory of art he based on it. I would like to examine them in turn, beginning with two false choices, and ending up with the right one.

To return to our quotation: repetition, arrestment, barriers, petrification, not to mention *Weltzwang*, a term that obviously rhymes but, crucially, does not match up, with *Schicksalszwang* or *Wiederholungszwang* — if Einstein's terms sound vaguely familiar, that is because the first ontological stance he has in mind is clearly related to the behaviour of a certain protoplasmic vesicle in Sigmund Freud's *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* (1920). In Freud's account, that behaviour stands for a much more general attitude towards the real shared by all organisms, humans included: an attitude that erects a stimuli shield against the external world so as to produce a barrier of complexity-reduction as protection against the onrush of a hostile, chaotic phenomenal world.⁶ And as we know, through this effort to impose a measure of stability and regularity onto their environment, both the vesicle and the Perception-Consciousness system in Freud betray the wish, not to protect a vibrant life against the deadly adversity of the real, but rather, to protect their desire to die peacefully, 'after their own fashion': to install, already in life, a static equilibrium modelled on a constancy principle that would be fully consummated at its end. 'The aim of all life is death,' as Freud so famously declared.⁷

To which Carl Einstein would have responded: 'Not really, but, given the history of art and ideas, it could certainly seem that way.' A textbook example from the history of art will serve to make the point here; although, as Einstein explained to Michel Leiris and as he argued in *Documents'* Critical Dictionary, ontological choice number one, just like its cousins, extends across all historical periods and cultural practices, from ancient religion through nineteenth-century philosophical idealism to contemporary poetry.⁸ In a number of writings from the moment of *Documents* or immediately thereafter, Einstein located the first ontological choice as far back as the origin of sedentary civilisation. To his mind, the art and architecture of the city-states of



ancient Mesopotamia marked the victory of a post-nomadic humanity over the fluidity of a real in which these subjects were no longer immersed so much (they thought) as they were now striating it [fig. 1].⁹ Typically, one of the versions of Einstein's argument occurs in the somewhat counterintuitive context of the Braque monograph.¹⁰ There, he argued that a will to permanence had been the originating force of human civilization: by inventing the city (*Stadt*) as *Stete*, or steady terrain, and the home as *Bleibe*, or an abode that will remain (*bleiben*) the same and in the same place over time; and by populating this new environment with an architecture whose language of 'repetitive formal elements' further reinforced the structure of lives now organised according to a cyclical rhythm of work, ritual, and cosmology.¹¹ A 'settler conservatism' has pacified the real with an elementary architectonic language, which, in virtue of its simplicity, regularity, and durability amounts to a veritable cultural 'form shield' (*Formschutz*) against the onslaught of what is perceived as an overly complex, dangerously unpredictable, and threateningly fluid real.¹² According to Carl Einstein, I am saying, the true founder of Sumer and Babylon was the death drive.

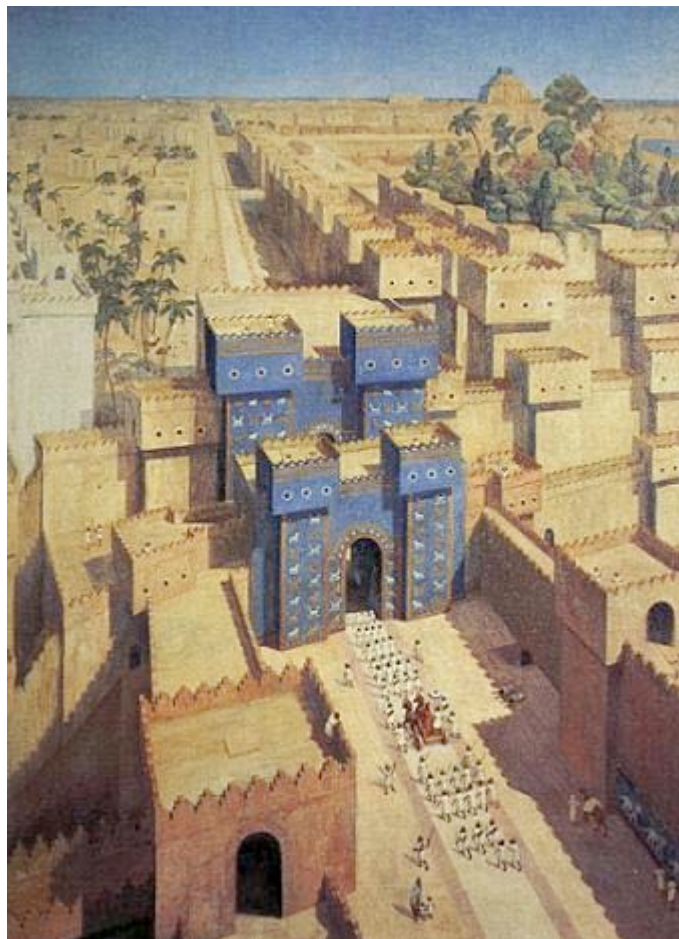


Fig. 1: Babylon in the time of Nebuchadnezzar II. Reconstruction by Maurice Bardin after a watercolour drawing by Herbert Anger. The Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago. (Photo: Courtesy of The Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago.)



Nowhere is this more so than in the numerous portrait statues which Gudea, ruler of the city-state of Lagash (c.2150-2125 B.C.), had commissioned during his reign so that his life and achievements might be commemorated millennia after his own death [fig. 2].¹³ Observing that many of Gudea's statues bear the inscription 'May his life be long,' Einstein insisted that, contrary to their overt purpose, their production was motivated by a paralysing fear of perishing: 'Terrified by death, men try to conserve life in the image, and the settler, afraid of chaos, uses tectonic forms to this end. The enduring existence of the deceased depends on the durability of the forms of the body; whence the popularity of solid stone.'¹⁴ Having had his motionless likeness carved in the near-indestructible hardness of diorite, Einstein implied, Gudea had achieved permanently what Freud's trauma victims did only intermittently; namely, what he elsewhere called a 'defence against death through the anticipation of death.'¹⁵



Fig. 2: Seated Statue of Gudea, 2150–2100 BC, diorite, 44 cm high. Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, Harris Brisbane Dick Fund, 1959 (59.2). (Photo: The Photograph Studio, The Metropolitan Museum of Art.)

Now, in Gudea's case, the deadly constancy of the portraits' subject was ensured by the immutability of the medium; but in Einstein's thought the thanatophilia of the *tectonic* had far wider applications: not just as a material property but rather as a *structure of formal organisation*.



Einstein had initially stolen the concept from his hated teacher, Heinrich Wölfflin.¹⁶ The tectonic, as Wölfflin examined it in his *Principles of Art History* (1915) and elsewhere, pivoted on a specific reciprocal relation between filling and frame, which he saw achieved in the art of the High Renaissance:

In the tectonic style, the filling visibly relates to the given space [...]. Whether the field is rectangular or round, we find the classic epoch following the principle of having the given conditions become the rule of one's own personal will, that is, the whole is made to look as if this filling were just made for this frame, and vice versa.¹⁷

Wölfflin's discussion of Brescianino's *Venus* [fig. 3] is a case in point:

The figure has been comprehended into a schema so that [...] the formal elements interact with each other in elementary contrasts, and the totality of the image is governed throughout by tectonic forces. Picture axis and figure axis mutually reinforce one another.¹⁸



Fig. 3: Andrea del Brescianino, *Venus*, c.1525, oil on canvas, 168 x 67 cm. Rome, Galleria Borghese.



As early as his *Prolegomena* (1886), architecture had served Wölfflin as the very paradigm of organised form, including the form of subjecthood: 'What holds us upright and prevents a formless collapse? It is the opposing force that we may call will, life, or whatever. I call it force of form [*Formkraft*] ... We assume that in everything there is a will that struggles to become form and has to overcome the resistance of formless matter.'¹⁹ In Wölfflin, for visual art to become tectonic, for the body to be configured *sub specie architecturae* (his words),²⁰ was for life to win the battle against death. But we are already prepared to understand that another way of putting this would be to say that, on the contrary, Wölfflin's tectonic internalised the death drive's impulse toward stasis as the formal reciprocity of filling and frame; such that a human subject here voluntarily submits to the rigorous limits of a pre-given order of his own making.

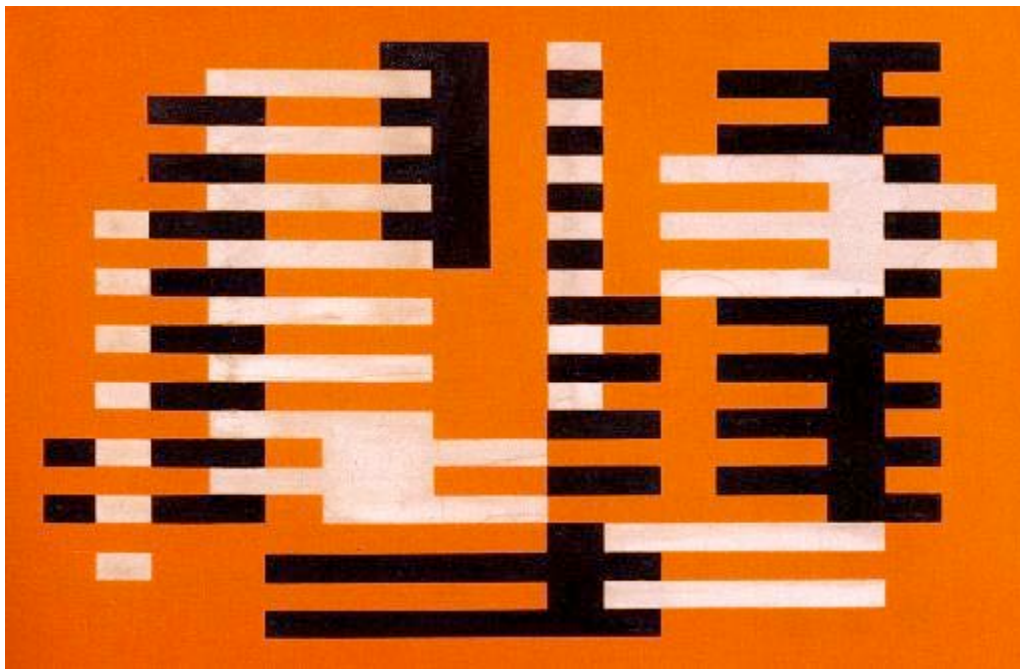


Fig. 4: Josef Albers, *Tectonic Group*, 1925, sandblasted glass, 29 x 45 cm. Private Collection, Switzerland.
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That at least was Carl Einstein's take on the matter:

In the hands of most people the tectonic will petrify into a hopelessly repeated schema; understandably so, given that it is a sign of fear and an expression of the desire for permanency. Originally a means of power employed against nature, the tectonic in due course turns against man himself.²¹

Einstein was not talking about the Renaissance here but about his own present. The passage just quoted comes from the third edition of his *Art of the 20th Century* (1931), a book in which Einstein



indulged one more time in his hatred, deep and mostly misguided, for modern *abstraction* — all of it. He lambasted the most diverse practices, from Mondrian to Tatlin, as ‘kitsch rationalism,’ ‘Platonism of formal purity,’ ‘fetishism of the absolute,’ and, not least, ‘ersatz architecture.’²² This latter term does indeed fit an image like Josef Albers’s 1925 *Tectonic Group* (sic!) [fig. 4], similar works by whom were included in a Zurich Kunsthhaus survey of recent abstract and surrealist painting that Einstein had already dismissed in a *Documents* review in 1929: ‘It’s an old story: generalization as a tool of power. The tensed and practically un-decomposable images of one’s predecessors are reduced to purified formulas, which is to say they are being *emptied*.’²³ What made modern abstraction loathsome to Einstein, that is to say, was that its thanatophilic tectonic was extrapolated, to his mind, from the skeletal armature of the grid of his beloved Analytic Cubism [fig. 5]. Abstraction had stolen the tectonic from Cubism and put it in service of the death drive; and as we shall see, for Einstein it fell to an erstwhile Cubist to reclaim it for the real.



Fig. 5: Pablo Picasso, *L'Aficionado*, 1912, oil on canvas, 135 x 82 cm. Kunstmuseum Basel, Gift of Raoul La Roche, 1952 (Photo: Kunstmuseum Basel, Martin Bühler.) © 2007 Estate of Pablo Picasso/Artists' Rights Society (ARS), New York.

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*The transvaluation [of rational man] had already begun with Nietzsche, who had insisted on the primary influence of the drives, compared to which the role of reason would rather be that of a life-inhibiting force. This transvaluation was in turn powerfully promoted by Freud, who rediscovered in the dream and the unconscious the life of the drives, the forces that oppose the rational.*²⁴

Form against formlessness; stasis against movement; frame against filling; death (apparently) against life; reason against the drives: given this string of dual terms, and his rejection, in each case, of the first of the two, one might expect that Einstein would have unconditionally embraced the second one. One might expect, in other words, that, around the time of his engagement in *Documents*, Einstein, who was familiar with both the writings of Freud and the art of French surrealism since at least 1926, would have celebrated the surrealists' exploration of that most anti-tectonic of territories: the Freudian unconscious.²⁵ Even more so since Einstein himself, as the above quotation from the surrealism chapter of the *Art of the 20th Century* suggests, was a deeply *Nietzschean* Freudian, one to whom even the notion of the 'complex' already smacked of rationalisation, and to whom to conceive of the unconscious as something *repressed* was to take the sting out of its unbridled positivity.²⁶

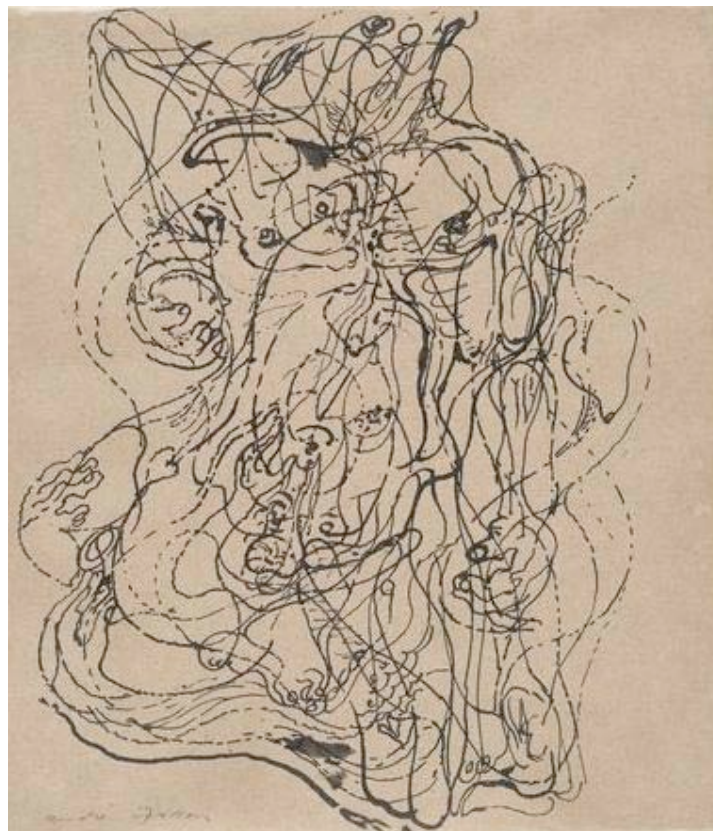


Fig. 6: André Masson, *Automatic Drawing*, 1924, ink on paper, 23.5 x 20.6 cm. Museum of Modern Art, New York. Given anonymously. © 2007 Artists' Rights Society (ARS), New York/ADAGP, Paris.



And Einstein did indeed reserve special praise for that surrealist practice which seemed to render visible Dionysian psychic intensity unchecked by any rationalist agency of censorship. Again and again in his writings on modern art since at least 1928 he celebrated the surrealist practice of automatic drawing, or as he preferred to call it, the 'psychogram' [fig. 6].²⁷ Yet, again and again he would also go on to double back on himself, and *reject* the psychogram – on ontological grounds. 'By and large, the art which I'm going to show you,' he told his audience at a talk in Berlin around 1931, to which he had brought slides of 'automatic drawings' by André Masson, among others, 'is being created and dominated by a passive type, a suffering subject.'²⁸ And in the *Art of the 20th Century* he added:

Stasis had been a product of the fear of death, of the effort to arrest the continuous process toward death; it was the life belt of the fearful. [...] Today, yielding once more to process [...] one paints out of cruelty against oneself, and such images are stages en route to death, symptoms of self-destruction.²⁹

In other words: if the immobilised form of the tectonic image is a deathlike defence against the real, then the breathless movement of intensity recorded by the psychogram, seemingly its radical opposite, is in fact, given its ontological stance, its twin.

Nietzsche had explained how this could be so in the *Will to Power*. There, the twin stances towards the real that Einstein saw manifested in the tectonic and the psychogram were described as *two* kinds of *reactivity* which opposed a *single* kind of *activity*; two kinds which, as Gilles Deleuze has shown, are only *gradually*, not *categorically*, different from one another. For Nietzsche, as Deleuze argued in his seminal monograph on the thinker, 'passive' is simply 'reaction insofar as it is not acted. The term "passive" stands for the triumph of reaction, the moment when, ceasing to be acted, it becomes a *ressentiment*.'³⁰ If the stern formal order of the tectonic is a resentful — a violent but merely defensive — reaction against the onrush of the real by a human subject seeking to preserve its false integrity, then the psychogram stands for the moment in which that subject, instead of switching from *reaction* to *action*, retreats from *reaction* to *passivity*, and, overpowered by the flow of intensity, dissolves into it, as in the formless tangle of the psychographic record.

So it is that, hypostatised in isolation, both the tectonic and the psychogram must end in death: the death of the real in one case, the death of the subject, *who is yet part of the real*, in the other. And so it is that Einstein, who called the tectonic 'sadistic',³¹ was troubled in turn by what he called 'the downright masochistic attitude' he saw at work in the psychogram.³² He was troubled, in other words, by the way in which the arrow of ontological violence had been not broken, but simply reversed. In such passages, Einstein both adapted and re-described the



theory of *Triebumkehr*, or inversion of drives, proposed by Freud in 'Instincts and Their Vicissitudes' (1915), according to which masochism is a primary sadism against the environment turned inward against the subject itself.³³ For Freud, such *Triebumkehr* also entailed the reversal of a drive's energy charge from *active* to *passive*, from violator to victim. Combining Freud with Nietzsche as he did, Einstein maintained that the reversal was rather from *re-active* to *passive*. What Leo Bersani called the ontology of hate in the Freudian subject circa 1915 is, Einstein helps us understand, nothing other than Nietzsche's *ressentiment*.³⁴

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'Nietzsche had strictly separated Dionysian rapture from the Apollonian state of meditative purification, but the two do in fact complement one another.'³⁵ Thus Einstein's claim in the Picasso section of *The Art of the 20th Century's* Cubism chapter. And it was indeed Picasso whom he had in mind as the artist whose works managed to dovetail these two complements, the Apollonian and the Dionysian, or, which is the same thing, the tectonic and the psychogram. There are, Einstein argued, two 'decisive psychological poles between which these images [by Picasso] are oscillating [*schwingen*]': 'the pole of unconscious vision' on one hand, the pole of 'conscious construction' on the other; 'subjective hallucination' on one hand, 'collective tectonic forms' on the other; a 'zone of suffering' on one hand, that of 'active, willed construction' on the other.³⁶ It is this fusion of the two that Einstein believed Picasso had achieved in certain works from the later 1920s, through what he called, in a significant paradox, a 'tectonic hallucination': a formal imbrication of the forces of action and reaction in the immanence of a single work of art - an imbrication, which, it itself, like the Will to Power, is however *active*.

This begs the question: in which works from the later 1920s did Picasso achieve this? Einstein's own answer presents us with a difficulty, because it is not satisfying. For the most visible *locus* at which he endorsed Picasso's work as the paradigm of tectonic hallucination is his essay in the first *Documents* issue of 1929, 'Pablo Picasso: Some Paintings from 1928.'³⁷ The paintings in question are *The Studio* (1927/28) and *The Painter and His Model* (1928), both now in the Museum of Modern Art, New York, and *The Studio* (1928) in the Venice Guggenheim. And the problem is that Einstein's theory doesn't gain enough purchase to work as a truly incisive description of them. It cannot account for the static intensity of the *Studio* (the less so because Einstein's general indifference to colour in art is sorely evident in this case); and it cannot account for the exuberance of heterogeneous forms that is *The Painter and His Model*. But rather than prove how his argument doesn't work, I'd like to suggest some cases in which, in my opinion, it *does*.

The two works that to my mind fit Einstein's theory much better were painted at a slightly earlier date - 1926 rather than 1927/28 - but otherwise share a number of features with his



examples: their monumental size, which parades them as major statements by the artist (they both measure roughly 68 by 100 inches); their panoramic horizontal format; their setting (they are both interiors, more precisely, a studio and a workshop: in other words, they are paradigmatic spaces for the production of form); and their *dramatis personae*: like Einstein's examples they are both concerned with staging a sexually charged encounter between male and female. They are *The Painter and His Model* now in the Musée Picasso (1926), and the *Milliner's Workshop* (1926), now in the Pompidou [figs. 7 and 11].



Fig. 7: Pablo Picasso, *The Painter and His Model*, 1926, oil on canvas, 172 x 256 cm. Musée Picasso, Paris.
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Both works are often considered examples of a Picasso, out at sea after his abortive flirtation with neo-classicist painting in the early 1920s, looking closely at the art of an emerging generation of surrealists for a creative shot in the arm. But for all the obvious inspiration Picasso found in Masson and Joan Miró, these works amount to far more than an eclectic mapping of automatic drawing onto the genre of the artist's studio. Instead, Picasso, as Einstein will help us see, was prompted by the surrealists to revisit his own pre-classicist achievements, and re-articulate them in a way his sources were never able or willing to do: in such a way that the tectonic and the psychogram were here at once *fused* into a whole, and *activated* as engines for the production of a novel kind of form. I will begin testing this hypothesis by describing the *Painter and His Model*, which I consider the logical (if not chronological) first of the two.



We are looking at a cramped interior space almost filled to capacity with the expansive bodies of two monumental figures. At right there is the artist, sitting in an armchair hunched over a palette which he clutches with his left hand, and from which the brush held by his right is picking up some pigment. The artist's head is framed on the left by a canvas tacked to a stretcher which displays what may be a rough sketch of the model in front of him; and on the wall to the right we find a finished black-and-white image showing one of Picasso's trademark 'double heads.' At the extreme right a strip of primed canvas with underdrawing has been left exposed. And on the left side of the canvas there is the contorted shape of the female model, whose pin-sized head is propped up by her two arms close to the edge of the composition; whose giant left foot juts forward into its centre; and whose torso we are asked to imagine reclining somewhere in between, on an upended bed propped up by a row of floorboards.

But of course even this basic description of the image is already far too naturalistic and iconographic. Because the true 'subject' of the painting is ultimately not an encounter between artist and model as distinct individuals in the intimacy of a studio interior, but on the contrary the dissolution of their independent identities within a single continuous web of pulsating black lines or bands. This in spite of the fact that the web can be imagined to have originated in one of the figures: namely as a kind of gigantic doodle spreading out from the intersection of brush and palette (and, one feels forced to add, crotch) on the right. But that suggestion is powerfully countermanded by the final result: an all-over skein whose radical uncenteredness, directionlessness, and absence of hierarchy works against any sense of either an origin (the painter as wellspring of aesthetic form and sexual fantasy) or of a narrative chronology (the web unfolding from the right). Instead, our visual impression is of a looping back and forth between left and right, up and down, of the pulsating bands, from whose interaction every element in the image, including the figure of their creator, has emerged. The painter in his studio is here defined, not as the author of a desiring fantasy or of its representation, but as one more local event among others *within* a fantasy that is not 'his': within a network of unbound energy which produces individual subjects and their representations, as opposed to being produced, or represented, by them.

I shall explore the psychological implications of that productive network in a moment; but for now I want to stress how remarkable it is that it should hold together at all - that the network of bands pulsating across the canvas should be able both to spin forth a whole spectrum of figurations, from the high-abstract undulations in the centre all the way to naturalistic details like palette and thumb; *and* that it should nevertheless be able to sustain its own continuity: the continuity of an ambience or milieu that weaves depth, shallowness, and vastly divergent scalar relations and alignments in space into a single fabric. I say 'fabric' rather than 'space,' because space in this image is not an empty a priori medium that would subsequently be filled with bodies and objects. Rather, space here comes into being only locally, and together with figuration: it



adheres to objects, it does not *receive* them. That is why contrasts of proportion and pictorial convention that would be gratingly incompatible in a unified homogeneous space can exist side by side: among them the contrast between the model's massive, diagonally foreshortened foot and the artist's two-dimensional leg in profile; or that between the bed wrenched up from the ground plane by floorboards that refuse to recede as orthogonals on one hand, and the painter's armchair that is firmly resting *on* that ground plane on the other.

But 'contrast' is not the right word here, if that term means anything like a 'rupture,' anything like an irreconcilable qualitative difference. Because Picasso has activated the one formal device that produces figures and space in the work - the black line - in such a way that it will function now as contour, now as surface ornament: now as an emerged figure, now as the very medium of emergence; and this without there ever being a categorical break between the two. The relation between network and figure is here rather like that between a body of water and an eddy; or between a force field and a discharge: between a local eruption and a surface whose turmoil has brought it forth. And yet, in the *Painter and His Model* this seamless continuity seems to be threatened to a degree by the presence of the three large, upright polygonal fields whose greyish, ochre and bright white shapes appear altogether out of sync with the black web. For these fields are all colour, however ghastly; where the web is all line. The fields are shapes without separate boundary, where the lines of the web are all boundary without field. And the fields, it would seem, are without representational function, where the lines, as we saw, drift between abstraction and figuration. But the very fact of their opposition provides a hint that black line and coloured field once belonged together; and that only by 1926 they have become, or have again become, the two halves of a totality to which they no longer add up... because they have meanwhile joined to form a new one.

Now, this *earlier* totality had been that single unbroken visual plenum which is the three-dimensional figure or object as it is conjured up on the canvas by means of contour on one hand, chiaroscuro modelling on the other. And as every modernist knows, this pair of formal devices - black line as contour and chiaroscuro as illuminated colour - were not separated at birth in the work of Picasso. That happened only at the moment of Analytic Cubism, and every survey of modern art tells at least part of the story of their parting of ways [figs. 8-10]. The story would begin with an image like *Boy leading a Horse* (1905/06), in which a thick black contour proclaims the utter distinctness of figure from environment; and in which that figure's almost sculptural presence is suggested by the trademark Rose Period brushwork that combines a sense of pigment as palpable substance with the visual illusion of a relief of light and dark cast on the skin by a strong but scattered lighting. The story would continue by showing how in the following years the figure's totality as bounded chiaroscuro would be torn apart as its constituent elements would be separated out. In iconic Cubist works like *Girl with a Mandolin* (1910) and '*Ma Jolie*' (1911/12) the artist, in the legendary words of his dealer and Einstein's friend, Daniel-Henry Kahnweiler,



'pierces the closed form,' driving a wedge between contour and modelling, line and colour, until a moment is reached when the former would become a scaffolding within whose compartments the fragments of the latter would be suspended like so many brilliantly sparkling facets of a broken jewel.³⁸ The motivation for this project has been described many times: as an effort to purge the modern work of art of the received devices of three-dimensional illusionism, and instead redefine it no longer as window but as surface: a surface on which what used to be *contour* would now become *grid*: a configuration of lines that would no longer trace the outline of an imagined object but echo instead the shape and format of the actual object that is the canvas. To move from contour to grid, and from modelled body to illuminated colour facet was then to move from an illusion to the analysis of the formal devices which produced that illusion; it was to move, in a materialist reading of Analytic Cubism's politics of form, from ideology to critique.³⁹

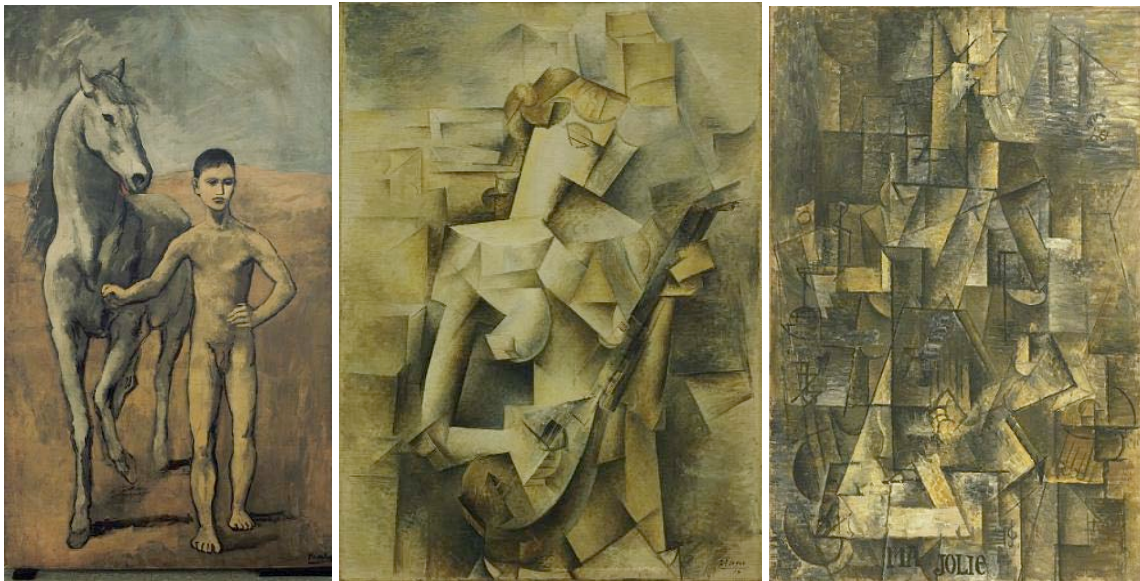


Fig. 8: Pablo Picasso, *Boy Leading a Horse*, 1906, oil on canvas, 220.3 x 130.6 cm. Museum of Modern Art, New York; Fig. 9: Pablo Picasso, *Girl with a Mandolin (Fanny Tellier)*, 1910, oil on canvas, 100.3 x 73.6 cm. Museum of Modern Art, New York, Nelson A. Rockefeller Bequest; Fig. 10: Pablo Picasso, '*Ma Jolie*,' winter 1911/12, oil on canvas, 100 x 64.5 cm. Museum of Modern Art, New York. Acquired through the Lillie P. Bliss Bequest. All © 2007 Estate of Pablo Picasso/Artists' Rights Society (ARS), New York.

But from Einstein's point of view that move came with a danger. As he put it in *Negro Sculpture* (1915), in a brief aside on the task of the 'artist of today,' by whom he meant the Cubist Picasso: 'an all too reactive strain is woven into his efforts; his critique, necessary as it is, reinforces the analytical side.'⁴⁰ In other words, Analytic Cubism was in danger of having been *merely critical*: too occupied as it was with reactively destroying an old order of representation instead of actively constructing a new one. And the fact that modern abstractionists like Albers seemed to claim that by hypostatizing the grid they had taken Cubism to its own logical conclusion seemed only to prove that the laying-bare of this device - which we will recognize as



the tectonic - was a deeply ambivalent achievement. The tectonic was in need of an activation that was affirmative first, critical second: one that got rid of the old order by the sheer force of its own positivity.

And that is indeed what Picasso in *The Painter and His Model* set out to do [fig. 7]. Instead of having the grid annihilate a figure composed of chiaroscuro and contour in the name of the tectonic, this painting preserves Analytic Cubism's separation of formal devices, yet transforms their function and the terms of their interaction. I have already suggested how the web is an avatar of the grid, but a grid activated now as a milieu for the emergence of form. And the same is true for the coloured panels. They are monumental versions of Analytic Cubism's chiaroscuro facets; but with two crucial differences. On one hand, all highlights and traces of shading have been purged from them, so that their tectonic planarity is even less in doubt. On the other hand, the panels have cut loose from their former subservient role: they do not inhabit the network of lines but rather assert themselves against it even as they partly promote its cause. For the panels are glaring, unmodulated light, slices of illumination that single out sections of the web with the precision and randomness of beaming searchlights. Precision, as when the minuscule face and the hands of the woman are caught in the glare at the far left edge; randomness, when the illumination of the centre section by the most prominent panel only works to render its semantic emptiness even more evident; and a mix between the two, when, above the painter's head, the light reveals a weird face with empty eye sockets and caricature grin.

All of which amounts to saying that with this image we are looking at a fusion of tectonic and psychogram in such a way that the fundamental pictorial devices which Cubism had analysed out are rearticulated in order to arrive at a specific kind of visibility: a visibility of the unconscious as an active, productive force. With its emphasis on process rather than epiphany, and on continuity rather than rupture, the unconscious at issue here is decidedly different from the intense stillness that characterizes the punctual moment of a traumatic encounter; and that is one reason why, in spite of tempting motifs like the female foot, I have not stressed at all the theoretical arsenal of fetishism and castration anxiety. Rather, the 'tectonic hallucination' generated here is one that resembles the pulsating force field of the primary process as Freud had described it in the *Interpretation of Dreams*: the incessant flow of raw, unbound energy as it moves, by way of condensation and displacement, from one intense yet brief cathexis to another; as when a black line will suddenly blossom (or condense) into the contour of a foot or the idiotic cartoon profile of a bird; or when a white light will slice a face in half down along the nose, displacing attention to the way in which that half, in turn, is made up of two more halves: one profile on top of another, both pivoting around a single vaginal eye.

What Einstein calls 'tectonic hallucination,' a merging of the Dionysian and the Apollonian, then more specifically takes the shape, in *The Painter and His Model*, of a formalisation of psychic energy. This formalisation avoids both the reactive order of immobile



form that had been the threat of Wölfflin's tectonic to Cubism's grid; and it avoids the inchoate discharge that is automatic drawing in its pure state. Instead, it charges up the former with the latter, and in the process activates the entire composition to become something like a force field: a shallow, volatile, non-hierarchical milieu composed of energy flows that join into provisionally concrete configurations, which however never cut their ties to that milieu. This last point is crucial, because it is on this level - on the level of what we might call the emergence of formal events within a world - that certain extraordinary statements by Einstein on Picasso will begin to make sense. These statements not only introduce us to a new discursive context that is extremely germane to the discussion of both *The Painter and His Model* and its companion piece; they also help us understand that far more is at stake in this discussion than yet another psychoanalytic reading of Picasso's surrealism, however sophisticated. Psychoanalysis too was at stake for Einstein, to be sure: but insofar as it too was founded, as it was for Freud himself, in a philosophy of being: insofar as it helps us think through our ontological stances towards the real.

* * *



Fig. 11: Pablo Picasso, *The Milliner's Workshop*, 1926, oil on canvas, 172 x 256 cm. Paris, Musée National d'Art moderne. © 2007 Estate of Pablo Picasso/Artists' Rights Society (ARS), New York.

By way of introducing this new discourse I turn to the companion piece to *The Painter and His Model*: *The Milliner's Workshop* from 1926 [fig. 11], a work that has been incisively discussed by



Rosalind Krauss. An example of what she calls Picasso's 'Miróism,' Krauss sees it sandwiched between two phases of pastiche - one neo-classicist, one Matissean - and she considers it a temporary creative shot in the arm for Picasso.⁴¹ Especially relevant for our purposes here is what she has described as the "'quasi-automatic" infrastructure' of the *Milliner's Workshop*, a technique that corresponds to the characteristically surrealist flavour of both its mysteriously banal subject matter - the interior of a boutique opposite Picasso's apartment, recorded by him from the fourth floor of his studio window - and of its supposed genesis. (Picasso, by his own account, painted it at the time of Juan Gris' death and later claimed that he himself 'didn't know what it represented.') We are then looking at an interestingly hybrid image: one in which the unconscious has been factored into the 'all-over skein that forms the rhythmic armature of this still more or less Cubist work,' which yet also 'betrays the impact' of a younger surrealist artist. What Picasso found in Miró, in other words, was a specific motivation of the very Cubist grid of his own invention - a way of turning it into the structure of a psychic automatism, the 'unconscious impulses of the hand [...] forming its compositional network.'⁴²

Another - Einsteinian - way of stating this would be to say: even more so than in *The Painter and His Model*, in the *Milliner's Workshop*, an *active* relation towards the real causes the Cubist grid — an index of the *tectonic* surface — to be remotivated as the generative structure of a very specific kind of 'hallucination,' one that blends the unconscious with the world, psychology with ontology. In the Picasso essay in *Documents*, but by no means only there, Einstein phrased this crucial transformation thus: 'Earlier on [in Cubism] transparent planes had cut into each other and created discontinuous forms [figs. 5, 10]; whereas these days one creates a certain continuity of analogical forms. [...] The figures inscribed into the surface emerge from a Beyond [*au-delà*] of form. All their parts are rendered as analogies of the totality of the composition; their *valeurs* are derived from the telepathy of imagined analogical forms and their variations.'⁴³ Telepathy, analogy: terms that are unfamiliar from either Nietzsche, Freud, or contemporary Picasso criticism, and to which I'd like to add another from Einstein's *Documents* essay on Cubism; a term which subsumes them both and which identifies the discourse from which he borrowed his art critical vocabulary: *animism*.⁴⁴ With this I enter a territory that has recently been explored in a stimulating book by Christopher Green: the relevance of ethnographic concepts of magic for the work of Picasso around the time of *Documents*.⁴⁵

Early twentieth-century ethnography had theorised the 'primitive' worldview of animism as something that a hardcore Nietzschean could recognise, without blinking too hard, as a philosophy of the phenomenal world as Will to Power. Thinkers with whose work Einstein was familiar, like Lucien Lévy-Bruhl on 'prelogical thought' and Henri Hubert and Marcel Mauss on magic, set out a theory of the real as a single, non-hierarchised continuum of inanimate and animate forces.⁴⁶ Lévy-Bruhl, for example, insisted that the 'natural environment of a certain group, tribes or family of tribes [...] appears in their collective representations, not as an object or



a system of objects and phenomena governed by fixed laws, according to the laws of rational thought — but as an unstable ensemble of mystic *actions and reactions*, of which persons, things, phenomena, are but the vehicles and manifestations.⁴⁷ These actions and reactions are governed instead by what Lévy-Bruhl famously called the *participation* of all phenomena in one another by way of modalities such as sympathy, telekinesis (remember Einstein on telepathy), ‘transference, contact, projection, contamination, defilement, possession.’⁴⁸ so many synonyms for an interaction of forces which, unlike modern Western metaphysics — for which the most convenient shorthand remains Martin Heidegger’s ‘world picture’⁴⁹ — knows no finite, static identities of things or subjects nor any discontinuities between them but instead promotes their constant mutual influence, enabling all of them to turn into each other’s property or effect.

Nowhere more so than in that peculiar mainstay of Melanesian animism which Hubert and Mauss had brilliantly analysed in the *General Theory of Magic* (1902/03) and which crops up again and again in Einstein’s work from the 1930s: *mana*.⁵⁰ What is *mana*?

Mana is first of all an action of a certain kind, that is, a spiritual action that works at a distance and between sympathetic beings. It is also a kind of ether, imponderable, communicable, which spreads of its own accord. *Mana* is also a milieu, or more exactly functions as a milieu, which in itself is *mana*. [...] It is the *mana* of the magician which works through the *mana* of the rite on the *mana* of the *tindalo*, and which sets other *manas* in motion and so forth and so on. In its *actions and reactions* there are no other forces involved apart from *mana*. It is produced in a closed circuit, in which everything is *mana* and which is itself *mana*, if we may so express it.⁵¹

So that’s what *mana* is: *everything*. It is, simultaneously and inextricably, a quality, a substance, an environment, and an agency: a ‘power-milieu,’⁵² in Mauss’s own words, at once a static ambience *and* a mobile force that everywhere traverses and stirs it, both enabling and provoking the emergence of events within it. The *mana* of Melanesian animism, he said, is ‘the active, distinct and immanent principle of the whole universe’⁵³ - in short, the immanent rather than metaphysical cause of a thoroughly nontranscendental pantheism.⁵⁴

What Mauss’s animism shared with Nietzsche’s ontology, Einstein must have realised, was, first, that both are accounts of the world in which form and flux, subjecthood and subjectivity are intertwined, and within which there are no safe havens of constancy for a reactive-minded subject to retreat to. Secondly, Einstein will have understood that at the same time this animist universe is not all formless and boundless contingency. It is an immanent, which is to say a *finite* universe: a closed circuit, as Mauss says. And it is a universe which, even as it repels its own striation by organized form, nonetheless governs the interaction of its elements by precise rules: the rules of sympathy according to Mauss, the law of participation according to Lévy-Bruhl. As



Einstein was reading ethnography while looking at Picasso, it must have dawned on him that in the former he had come upon a description of the interaction and emergence of forms within a bounded field that was eminently transferable to the latter.

'We are dealing here,' he argued in his Cubism essay, 'with a formal animism.'⁵⁵ And he elaborated the point in the *Art of the 20th Century*, calling Picasso's *Studio* the product of a 'formal mythology,' a set of configurations which, 'so far from being illustrations, emerge from formal immanence itself.'⁵⁶ To Einstein's mind, Picasso's art stands for a modern, thoroughly secular animism; and it does so to the extent that, rather than re-presenting it, the forms of art internalise it as their very generative principle. Hence analogy, telepathy, and the rest. In Einstein's book, to create an analogical composition is to do two things at once [fig. 11]. First, it is to anchor different elements within the overall similitude of a whole, thus making them communicate 'telepathically' with both it and one another all across a tightly organised yet thoroughly nonhierarchical surface like so many phenomena gliding through the smooth space of an animist universe. And yet, second, it is also to have these elements propagate themselves as ever so slightly different inflections of that whole: as inclinations rather than as instantiations of it; as differences emerging from sameness, novelty emerging from the given. So it is that the 'form fields' in the *Milliner's Workshop*, uniformly painted in different shades of grisaille, are, on one hand, joined into a flat all-over pattern, which, nowhere particularised by either local colour or traces of modelling, marks them unmistakably as formal relatives of the flat, rectangular canvas - as so many analogies, that is, of the very master paradigm of organized form: the tectonic. Yet so it is, also, that these fields will gather locally to align into nontectonic figurations - generating three-dimensional pockets of figure-and-ground within the overall rhythm of undulating form and dispersed lighting, as in the case of the squat figure of a sewing girl attentively bent over her needlework behind a table at left.

Ultimately, though, the image is about the coming into being, through a process of centring and re-centring, of provisionally stable, recognisable, and thereby Apollonian constellations of form - and then about their Dionysian unravelling, as the analogical elements that compose them, pulled elsewhere, join into new, psychically-invested associations with their neighbours in turn. Such associations are at most loosely readable in a narrative sense, which always implies discontinuity, an arrestment of forms under the yoke of meaning; whereas in the *Milliner's Workshop* local clusters of sense emerge within but are never permitted to disrupt an overall *continuity*. Such clusters are made visually compelling by the analogousness of - for example, and in ascending order of affective investment - four triangular elements converging into a star pattern at left of centre; three (or four) curved shapes aligning into a fleshy yet abstract blossom at dead centre; and that push and pull, ambivalently libidinal and violent, at the far right, where the 'form fields' have concretised into a Janus-faced shadow that projects an extremity through the door's upper panel into the women's space, which intrusion is reciprocated by the



equally tender and suffocating jigsaw caress that extends in the opposite direction through the lower panel.

This description will have indicated that what makes the *Milliner's Workshop* a more austere yet also a more fully realised work than *The Painter and His Model* is the way in which colour and line have here been integrated in a much tighter fashion. No longer do coloured polygons illuminate a linear network; instead, both have merged into a single cohesive mosaic composed of *tesserae* that are able to produce a whole range of different formal events, from depth to surface, illumination to darkness, geometric rigour to libidinal flow. All of which goes to say that here, all across the surface of the image, the unconscious, originating in a 'beyond of form,' nonetheless manifests its productive force everywhere and only ever *within* form. Form here being understood as the product, not of the deadly tectonicisation, of a hitherto formless 'psychic' animism, but rather of the simultaneous imbrication of the latter with the former, of the unconscious with the tectonic, as the very principle of an *individuation* which in Mauss's Melanesia governed the immanence of a natural world, and in Einstein's Picasso, the immanence of the canvas.

Given this, it is neither contradictory nor sentimental to say, as Einstein did in the *Documents* Cubism essay, that 'we consider tectonic forms [...] the most human of all, for they are the signs of a visually *active* subject who creates his own universe and refuses to be the *slave* of given form.'⁵⁷ *Action and reaction*: a subject has here chosen to resist both the pull of the death drive - the tendency of organised form towards tectonic inertia - and his own capitulation before the onrush of flux. Instead, he has risen to the challenge of *Weltzwang* and become an agency that enabled the latter to acquire visibility in the medium of the former. Such then was the veritable formalist ethics of Einstein's ontology, according to which to be an active subject means: in face of the real, of forces beyond one's control, whether within or without, not to annihilate either them or oneself - *and thereby the real* - but rather to join them, as force among forces, by formalising them.

* * *

In stating as much, I hope to have shown that it is neither inaccurate nor sufficient to consider Carl Einstein a relentlessly negative critic, as is frequently done, and most eloquently so in Georges Didi-Huberman's account of his thought.⁵⁸ To Didi-Huberman's mind, Einstein was centrally concerned with a project of what he variously calls 'decomposition,' 'deformation,' 'dissociation,' 'non-knowledge,' or 'anti-humanism.' And to be sure, Einstein was concerned with all that: *but not centrally*. At stake here are two profoundly different approaches to a politics of being, whether in art or in life; and Einstein's theory of action and reaction makes it clear which side he came down on. To promote the cause of an 'anti-humanism' and the rest is to promote a



model of critique that grants the object of that critique an ontological priority to the critique itself. For there to be an 'anti-', there first needs to be 'humanism'; for there to be a 'decomposition,' there first needs to be a 'composition.' Another way of stating this - in terms of Einstein's very own philosophy of the real - is to say that under this description, a politics of being will conceive of itself above all as a merely *reactive* enterprise: as a negation of a prior affirmation; a critique which, 'necessary as it is, reinforces the analytical side.' Whereas Einstein's work, including his work on Picasso's surrealism, was founded precisely not on a thought of *negativity in the first place* but rather on one of *positivity in the first place*. 'The given' must be negated, to be sure: through an affirmation of the new. The 'rational Self' must be negated, to be sure: through an affirmation of subjectivity. The deadening arrestment of form by the tectonic must be negated, to be sure: through an affirmation of formal animism.

Einstein's household god, in other words, was Nietzsche, not Hegel, and his thought was exploring the monist immanence of the Will to Power, where forces affirm themselves against each other's positivity, not the dualism of a dialectic, where they annihilate each other by way of the negative.⁵⁹ That is what renders all apparent parallels with Georges Bataille and Walter Benjamin, as opposed to Einstein's still largely unrecognised kinship with Michel Leiris, moot at the most fundamental level.⁶⁰ It is also what connects Einstein's project to a conceivably fundamental issue of modern thought that decades later would become a major point of contention between the two most brilliant philosophers of the postwar era. Because one reason why the immensely productive alliance of Gilles Deleuze and Michel Foucault finally stalled in the late 1970s was, precisely, their disagreement over a basic, perhaps *the* basic, ontological question: what comes first — power, or else desire? 'Subjectification,' or else lines of flight? No doubt, both come 'first'; but what is their *exact* (active/reactive) relation, and how will it be historicised, all the way up to our own present?⁶¹ At the moment of *Documents* and to varying degrees throughout his career, in his notes on art history and his Picasso art criticism, Carl Einstein was coming up with answers to these very questions.

¹ For a more comprehensive (and more comprehensively annotated) treatment of the issues raised here, see chapters 3 and 4 of my Ph.D. dissertation: *Defence of the Real: Carl Einstein's History and Theory of Art*, Columbia University, New York, 2005.

² Carl Einstein, 'Notes sur le cubisme,' *Documents*, 3, 1929, 146-155; reprinted in Einstein, *Werke*, vol. 3, eds Hermann Haarmann and Klaus Siebenhaar, Fannei & Walz, Berlin, 1996, 32-44.



³ For the first and, for all its relative brevity, by far the most incisive discussion of certain parts of this intellectual territory see Heidemarie Oehm, *Die Kunsttheorie Carl Einsteins*, Fink, Munich, 1976. The concept of immanence I use here is derived from the work of Gilles Deleuze. Its most strictly philosophical statement is his *Difference and Repetition*, trans. Paul Patton, Columbia University Press, New York, 1994.

⁴ 'die Petrification der Welt u des Daseins ist eine unserer primären Tendenzen, also der Kampf gegen das Sterben, gegen eine Masse von Bewegung, die Leben bedeutet, deren Energie aber die unsere übertrifft. Dieser ungeheuren vitalen Weltbewegung setzen wir in der Wiederholung der Akte, dem Ritual, Gedächtnis, Abstraktion, Stil einen Arret entgegen (eine Barriere); Kraft dem wir die Weltbewegung zu bremsen u zu verlangsamen versuchen. ein Mittel ... wodurch wir strukturen bilden und aufzwingen' (undated notes; reprinted in Carl Einstein, *Werke*, vol. 4, eds Hermann Haarmann and Klaus Siebenhaar, Fannei & Walz, Berlin, 1992, 380).

⁵ 'Verbegrifflichung heisst: Abwehr des Toetlichen und Lebendigen, unuebersehbaren Weltzwangs' (Carl Einstein, ['Gestalt und Begriff,'] in *Werke*, vol. 4, 194-221; 195; this text was translated into English by Charles W. Haxthausen as 'Gestalt and Concept,' *October*, 107, Winter 2004, 169-176; 170 [translation modified]). The entire paragraph is crucial. The argument also recurs throughout the Braque monograph, to which 'Gestalt and Concept,' a posthumously published text probably dating from the time of the book's writing, is closely related.

⁶ The presence of Freud in Einstein's thought is underexplored, and the presence of the death drive, which is what is at stake here, has barely been noticed at all. Andreas Michel is the only author to have at least referenced *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* and *Totem and Taboo*; see, respectively, his 'Formalism to Psychoanalysis: On the Politics of Primitivism in Carl Einstein,' in *The Imperialist Imagination: German Colonialism and Its Legacy*, ed. Sara Friedrichsmeyer et al., University of Michigan Press, Ann Arbor, 1998, 141-161; and 'Zur Bedeutung des Tektonischen im Werk Carl Einsteins,' in *Die visuelle Wende der Moderne: Carl Einsteins Kunst des 20. Jahrhunderts*, ed. Klaus H. Kiefer, Fink, Munich, 2003, 257-271.

⁷ Sigmund Freud, 'Beyond the Pleasure Principle,' in *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*, ed. and trans. James Strachey et al., 24 vols., Hogarth Press, London, 1953-1974, vol. XVIII, 7-71; 38.

⁸ See the celebrated journal entry by Michel Leiris, one of the few sources available that show Einstein's intellectual impact on his younger collaborators at *Documents*: 'La poésie n'est qu'une longue lutte contre la mort (qu'on tâche de connaître, avec l'idée qu'on acquerra ainsi un moyen de la dominer). [...] On se crée un monde poétique parce que dans ce monde tout paraît intangible et non soumis à la vicissitude des corps. A la base de toute évasion, ce n'est pas un désir de pureté qu'on trouve, mais la peur; et même quand on croit vraiment aimer la pureté, ce n'est pas parce qu'étant intemporelle elle est plus noble, mais seulement "intemporelle" au sens strict du mot, c'est-à-dire non assujettie au temps et à la mort (comme dit Einstein)' (Michel Leiris, *Journal 1922-1989*, ed. Jean Jamin, Gallimard, Paris, 1992, 164 [15 May 1929]). A month later, Einstein's Dictionary entry on the philosophical and religious notion of the Absolute would make the same point: 'On a identifié l'absolu à l'essence et à l'être même, et c'est par l'absolu qu'on s'éternise. Quelle crainte de la mort!' ('Absolu,' in *Documents*, 3, 1929, 169-170; 169). Klaus Kiefer was the first to have drawn attention to the importance of Leiris's diary passages: 'Die Ethnologisierung des kunstkritischen Diskurses: Carl Einsteins Beitrag zu *Documents*,' in *Elan Vital oder Das Auge des Eros*, ed. Hubertus Gaßner, Munich, Haus der Kunst, 1994, 90-103; 91.

⁹ I am referring here to the famous distinction drawn by Deleuze and Guattari between the 'smooth' space of nomad cultures and the 'striated' space of sedentary ones; see their *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, trans. Brian Massumi, University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis and London, 1987, 474-500.

¹⁰ While the Braque monograph, in typical fashion, does not mention a single specific example, the present illustration has not been chosen randomly. Babylon in general and the cult of Marduk in particular (whose ziggurat looms in the far right background) are discussed, in a similar



context, in Einstein's preface to an exhibition catalogue of sculptures from early antiquity: *Exhibition of Bronze Statuettes B.C. (Hittite, Etruscan, Egyptian, Greek)*, Stora Art Galleries, New York, s.d. [1933], 3-14; 5. (For the original German version of the preface see *Werke*, vol. 3, 611-630.)

¹¹ 'Der Siedler fixiert, sein Tun ist auf Dauer gerichtet. Und darum ist er konservativer und vielleicht beschränkter als der Nomade. So betont er die stets wiederkehrenden Elemente und bedient sich der tektonischen Formen [...] Man flüchtet immer wieder in die Bleibe und die Vorstellung der Stete und Wiederholung zurück' (Carl Einstein, *Georges Braque*, typescript, c.1931/32, reprinted in *Werke*, vol. 3, 251-516; 348 and 350).

¹² Einstein, *Werke*, vol. 3, 350. Einstein's *Formschutz* is evidently derived from the *Reizschutz* ('stimuli shield') of *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*; as has been noted by Michel, 'Zur Bedeutung des Tektonischen,' 269. The same goes, moreover, for Einstein's borrowing of the seemingly innocuous term 'conservatism' from the same text, in which Freud had claimed a conservative function for the death drive, because it is 'an urge inherent in organic life to restore an earlier state of things' (*Beyond the Pleasure Principle*, 36 and 38). In other words, according to Einstein reading Freud, Babylonian settlers are conservative insofar as they are thanatophiliacs: death is right-wing.

¹³ Einstein's interest in Mesopotamian art may have been inspired by (or perhaps may have inspired him to commission?) a brief, matter-of-factly survey essay by Georges Contenau on the subject, which explicitly mentions the portraiture of Gudea: 'L'Art sumérien: les conventions de la statuaire,' in *Documents*, 1, 1929, 1-8.

¹⁴ Einstein, *Exhibition of Bronze Statuettes B.C.*, 7 (translation modified).

¹⁵ 'Dauer oder Ewigkeit bedeuten eine Todesabwehr, indem man den Tod in ihnen antizipiert' (Einstein, 'Gestalt und Begriff,' 201).

¹⁶ It's sometimes suggested that the notion of the tectonic in either Einstein or Wölfflin or both crucially depended on Karl Bötticher's influential *Tektonik der Hellenen* (1852; 1874). In fact, Wölfflin derived it from his Munich teacher, Heinrich Brunn; and Einstein, from Wölfflin (although in certain rare and not necessarily felicitous moments Einstein's definition of the term was closer to that of his friend Kahnweiler). See Heinrich Brunn, 'Über tektonischen Stil in griechischer Plastik und Malerei' (1883), in *Heinrich Brunn's Kleine Schriften*, ed. Heinrich Bulle and Hermann Brunn, vol. 2, B.G. Teubner, Leipzig and Berlin, 1905, 99-141; and the instructive survey essay by Adolf Heinrich Borbein, 'Tektonik: Zur Geschichte eines Begriffs der Archäologie,' in *Archiv für Begriffsgeschichte*, XXVI, 1982, 61-100 (83-85 on Brunn).

¹⁷ Heinrich Wölfflin, *Kunstgeschichtliche Grundbegriffe: Das Problem der Stilentwicklung in der neueren Kunst*, Schwabe, Basel, 17/1984, 154; *Principles of Art History: The Problem of the Development of Style in later Art*, trans. M. D. Hottinger, Dover, New York, 1950, 131. Here and elsewhere I have modified the English version because the problematic complexity of Wölfflin's art history is buried under the uncomprehending pseudo-common sense of his early translators. A re-edition of the *Principles* and of *Classic Art* is badly needed.

¹⁸ Wölfflin, *Grundbegriffe*, 164; *Principles*, 139 (the early ascription of the painting to Franciabigio, originally endorsed by Wölfflin and followed by the 1932 translation, is no longer accepted).

¹⁹ Heinrich Wölfflin, 'Prolegomena to a Psychology of Architecture' (1886), in *Empathy, Form, and Space: Problems in German Aesthetics, 1873-1893*, eds Harry Francis Mallgrave and Eleftherios Ikonomou, Getty Centre for the History of Art and the Humanities, Santa Monica, 1994, 150-190; 159.

²⁰ Wölfflin, *Grundbegriffe*, 164; *Principles*, 139.

²¹ 'Den Meisten erstarrt das Tektonische zu hoffnungslos wiederholtem Schema, begreifbar, da jenes als Zeichen der Angst und des Wunsches nach Dauer erfaßt wird. Das Tektonische, dies Machtmittel gegen die Natur, wendet sich dann gegen den Menschen, der, wenn einmal die



schützende Beschwörungsformel Erfolg brachte, sklavisch sie wiederholt und zum Fetisch seiner formalen Riten erhebt' (Einstein, *Die Kunst des 20. Jahrhunderts* [3/1931], reprinted in *Werke*, vol. 5, eds Uwe Fleckner and Thomas W. Gaehtgens, Fannei & Walz, Berlin, 1996, 123).

²² Einstein, *Die Kunst des 20. Jahrhunderts*, 239.

²³ 'Tout cela est une vieille histoire: la généralisation prise pour un moyen de puissance. On réduit à des formules expurgées les tableaux tendus et presque indécompensables des davanciers, ce qui veut dire qu'on les vide' ('L'Exposition de l'art abstrait à Zurich,' *Documents*, 6, 1929, 342). It is unclear whether Einstein actually saw the show or whether he based his attack on the catalogue, which contained a shortlist of works and a representative selection of plates. On a side note, the catalogue preface, signed by Wilhelm Wartmann, the Kunsthhaus curator, reads in part as though the author was working from a blurb provided by Einstein which he only half understood; there is even a side reference to Hercules Seghers à propos the frottages of Max Ernst. See *Abstrakte und Surrealistische Malerei und Plastik*, Kunsthhaus Zurich, 6 October to 3 November 1929, 3-8.

²⁴ 'Eine Umwertung war bereits mit Nietzsche eingetreten, der den primären Einfluß des Trieblebens gewiesen hatte, mit dem verglichen die Vernunft eher die Rolle einer lebenshemmenden Kraft spielte. Diese Umwertung wurde nun erheblich von Freud verstärkt, der das Triebleben, die Gegenkräfte des Rationalen, im Traum und Unbewußten wiederfand' (Einstein, *Die Kunst des 20. Jahrhunderts*, 158).

²⁵ Biographical facts on the relation between Einstein and Surrealism are surprisingly scant. It is not clear whether he ever met André Breton in person, but it is generally assumed (no doubt correctly) that he was closely following the debates within the movement. He certainly knew all major texts by Breton and Louis Aragon, and the chapters on Paul Klee and to a lesser extent George Grosz in the first edition of his survey of twentieth-century art (1926) are already informed by Breton's *First Manifesto* (1924). The most useful discussions of Einstein and Surrealism are Klaus H. Kiefer, *Diskurswandel im Werk Carl Einsteins: Ein Beitrag zur Theorie und Geschichte de europäischen Avantgarde*, Niemeyer, Tübingen, 1994, 377-421; and Sabine Ebel, *Engagement und Kritik: Carl Einstein. Ein Vermittler zwischen Deutschland und Frankreich*, Ph.D. dissertation, Rheinische Friedrich-Wilhelms-Universität, Bonn, 1989, 169-177.

²⁶ Einstein's take on Freudian psychoanalysis during his Paris years is a crucial and massively understudied issue; it is the key for understanding both his ontological objections to Bretonian Surrealism and some of the common ground he shared instead with the 'Surrealism' of Georges Bataille. See my (unpublished) *Defence of the Real*, chapters 3 and 4.

²⁷ Carl Einstein, *Die Kunst des 20. Jahrhunderts*, Propyläen, Berlin, 2/1928, 122.

²⁸ 'Die Kunst, die ich Ihnen zeigen werde, ist im großen und ganzen vom Typus des Passiven, des leidenden Menschen bestimmt und gemacht' (Carl Einstein, 'Probleme heutiger Malerei,' lecture, Staatliche Kunstbibliothek, Berlin, c.1931; reprinted in *Werke*, vol. 3, eds Marion Schmid and Liliane Meffre, Medusa, Vienna and Berlin, 1985, 576-582; 578).

²⁹ 'Die Statik war ein Ergebnis der Todesangst, den abrollenden Prozeß in den Tod aufzuhalten, sie war Rettungsgürtel der Geängstigten. Nun gibt man sich von neuem dem verzweifelten Ablauf hin [...] Man malt aus Grausamkeit gegen sich selber, und solche Bilder sind Etappen zum Tode, Merkmale der Selbstvernichtung' (Einstein, *Die Kunst des 20. Jahrhunderts*, 165).

³⁰ Deleuze, *Nietzsche and Philosophy*, trans. Hugh Tomlinson, Columbia University Press, New York, 1983, 118. If Nietzsche was the greatest philosopher of action and reaction in modernity, then Jean Starobinski is now its greatest cultural historian. See his encyclopaedic survey *Action and Reaction: The Life and Adventures of a Couple*, Zone Books, New York, 2003.

³¹ E.g. in Einstein, *Georges Braque*, 348 and 349.

³² Einstein, *Die Kunst des 20. Jahrhunderts*, 165.



³³ Freud, 'Instincts and Their Vicissitudes,' in *Standard Edition*, vol. XIV, 109-140. *Triebumkehr* also inspired another Einsteinian neologism: *Stilumkehr*, or 'inversion of styles,' perhaps the most crucial methodological term of his late art history; for which see my *Defence of the Real*, chapter 3.

³⁴ Leo Bersani, *The Freudian Body: Psychoanalysis and Art*, Columbia University Press, New York, 1986, 86-88. It should be noted that in his second major essay on sadism and masochism Freud explicitly refers to the ontological stance modeled on the death drive as a 'will to power' ('The Economic Problem of Masochism' [1924], in *Standard Edition*, vol. XIX, 159-170; 163). In doing so, Freud in fact subscribed to what Nietzsche himself would have called a very specific, perspectivist self-interpretation of *one* force among others within the composite, multiple agon that is the real as Will to Power: namely that force which sadistically seeks to arrest becoming into being, the unknown into truth, and so on — and which, in so doing, deceives itself into thinking itself as, in fact, the Will to Power *tout court*. 'Contempt, hatred for all that perishes, changes, varies — whence comes this valuation of that which remains constant? Obviously, the will to truth is here merely the desire for a world of the constant' (Nietzsche, *The Will to Power*, trans. Walter Kaufmann and R. J. Hollingdale, Vintage Books, New York, 1968, 317 [#585A], 330 [#617]).

³⁵ 'Nietzsche hatte die dionysische Entrücktheit scharf von dem apollinischen, meditativ geklärten Zustand geschieden, wiewohl die beiden einander ergänzen' (Einstein, *Die Kunst des 20. Jahrhunderts*, 117).

³⁶ 'Die Bilder Picassos stehen zwischen den Polen der unbewußten Vision und der bewußten Gestaltung' (Einstein, *Die Kunst des 20. Jahrhunderts*, 111). '[D]iese Bilder [schwingen] zwischen den entscheidenden, seelischen Polen. Die kollektiven, tektonischen Formen erheben die subjektiven Gesichte zu normativer Geltung und führen über das Stadium unbewußter Besessenheit zur bewußten Formbildung. Aus der Zone des Leidens gelangt man zu aktiver, willensmäßiger Gestaltung, somit enthalten diese Arbeiten das Spiel der entgegengesetzten seelischen Grundkräfte' (Einstein, *Die Kunst des 20. Jahrhunderts*, 116). Einstein's contribution to the *Documents* Picassofest issue from 1930, likely written while he was revising the Picasso chapter of the third edition of the *Art of the 20th Century*, briefly rehearsed the same argument in French ('Picasso,' in *Documents*, 3, 1930, 155-157; reprinted in *Werke*, vol. 3, 118-121). As for the 'oscillation' between two psychological poles: the parallels to the thought of Aby Warburg (specifically the lecture on serpent ritual and the notebooks from the 1920s) are obvious enough and are pursued in my *Defence of the Real*, chapter 4. For documentary evidence of Einstein's contacts with the Warburg Institute at the time see Conor Joyce, *Carl Einstein in Documents and His Collaboration with Georges Bataille* (s.l.: Xlibris, 2002).

³⁷ Einstein, 'Pablo Picasso: Quelques tableaux de 1928,' in *Documents*, 1, 1929, 35-38; reprinted in *Werke*, vol. 3, 17-24.

³⁸ Daniel-Henry Kahnweiler, *Der Weg zum Kubismus*, Delphin, Munich, 1920; *The Rise of Cubism*, trans. Henry Aronson, Wittenborn Schulz, New York, 1949, 10.

³⁹ This at least is one possible reading of the complex accounts of Analytic Cubism's historical significance by Yve-Alain Bois and Rosalind Krauss which I have briefly paraphrased here.

⁴⁰ 'Der heutige Künstler [...] verweht seinem Streben das allzu Reaktive; seine nötige Kritik verstärkt das Analytische' (Einstein, *Negerplastik*, Verlag der Weißen Bücher, Leipzig, 1915; reprinted in *Werke*, vol. 1, 234-252; 240). The passage is cited here after the English translation: 'Negro Sculpture,' trans. Charles W. Haxthausen and Sebastian Zeidler, in *October*, 107, Winter 2004, 124-138; 129.

⁴¹ The relevant publications are Rosalind Krauss, 'Life with Picasso: Sketchbook No.92, 1926,' in *Je suis le cahier: The Sketchbooks of Picasso*, eds Arnold Glimcher and Marc Glimcher, Pace Gallery, New York, 1986, 113-123; *The Picasso Papers*, Farrar, Straus and Giroux, New York, 1998, 226-228; and 'Colour Wars: Picasso's Matisse Period,' in *Self and History: A Tribute to Linda Nochlin*, ed. Aruna D'Souza, Thames & Hudson, London, 2001, 137-152.



⁴² Krauss, 'Life with Picasso,' 116; 'Colour Wars,' 139.

⁴³ 'Auparavant, des plans transparents se coupaient en créant des formes discontinues: on crée aujourd'hui une certaine continuité des formes analogues ... Les figures inscrites, entièrement inventées, proviennent d'un au-delà formel. Toutes leurs parties sont données comme des analogies de la composition totale, les valeurs procédant de la télépathie des formes imaginaires analogues et des variations de ces formes' (Einstein, 'Pablo Picasso,' 38).

⁴⁴ Einstein, 'Notes sur le cubisme,' 155. To be sure, in this essay 'formal animism' is claimed as a hallmark of Analytic Cubism around 1912, rather than of Picasso circa 1928. But then, 'Notes sur le cubisme' tries very hard retroactively to surrealistise parts of Analytic Cubism. 'La condition d'un tel simultané est une vitesse sans temps, qui ressemble à la force synthétique et rapide des rêves' (155): Einstein experts will instantly recognise how what in the first edition of the *Art of the 20th Century* (1926) had been the central and ultimately Bergsonian concept of Cubist visual 'simultaneity' is now folded into a Freudian, psychoanalytic dimension. The strategy of surrealistising early Picasso, invented and perfected by Breton, evidently left an impression on Einstein.

⁴⁵ Christopher Green, *Picasso: Architecture and Vertigo*, Yale University Press, New Haven and London, 2005, 189-223. Green has associated Lévy-Bruhl on 'primitive mentality' and Hubert and Mauss on magic with the art of Picasso in the late 1920s, and he pertinently refers to Einstein's *Documents* essays in that context. More generally, the dualism that is announced in the title of his important study and explored in a chapter on Picasso's *Painter and his Model* is clearly relevant to Einstein's tectonic/psychogram dichotomy I am discussing here. Exactly *how* these two conceptual pairs map onto each other is a question which, having just studied Green's book, I must postpone to another occasion.

⁴⁶ Einstein had incorporated Lévy-Bruhl ideas into his own work as early as *Negro Sculpture* (1915), specifically its anti-evolutionist argument. During Einstein's Paris period, Lévy-Bruhl's name resurfaces on a reading list preserved in his estate (Berlin, Akademie der Künste, Carl-Einstein-Archiv, Sig. 240, fol. 46). And as Christopher Green has emphasized, at the moment of *Documents* Lévy-Bruhl was avidly studied by the young Leiris, that member of the Bataille circle who was intellectually closest to Einstein (*Picasso: Architecture and Vertigo*, 200). As for Mauss, a contributor to the *Documents* special issue on Picasso: Einstein seems to have discovered him only during his Paris period - perhaps on the suggestion of Leiris? The most useful study of Einstein and ethnography is Klaus H. Kiefer, 'Fonctions de l'art africain dans l'oeuvre de Carl Einstein,' in *Images de l'africain de l'antiquité au XXe siècle*, eds Daniel Droixhe and Klaus H. Kiefer, Lang, Frankfurt am Main, 1987, 149-176; see also a number of observations in his *Diskurswandel*, passim.

⁴⁷ Lucien Lévy-Bruhl, *Les Fonctions mentales dans les sociétés inférieures* (1910); *How Natives Think*, trans. Lilian A. Clare, Princeton University Press, Princeton, 1985, 98-99 (my emphasis).

⁴⁸ Lévy-Bruhl, *How Natives Think*, 99.

⁴⁹ Martin Heidegger, 'The Age of the World Picture,' in *The Question Concerning Technology and other Essays*, trans. William Lovitt, Harper & Row, New York, 1977, 115-154.

⁵⁰ Just one example - and an impressive one indeed, merging as it does Freud on the uncanny with Mauss on magic - from Einstein's posthumously published notes on animist art: '[I]n these spiritualist cultures there is no sharp distinction yet between the living being — the occasion of the image — and the image as double; for both are traversed or inhabited by the identical *mana* force. The *mana* of the dreamer or of the spirit of the dead may pass into the image doppelgänger, which thanks to the principle of sympathetic magic possesses an energy akin to that of the living being' ('in diesen spiritualistischen kulturen scheidet man noch nicht scharf zwischen dem lebenden wesen, dem bildanlass und dem bildhaften doppelgaenger; denn beide sind von der gleichen manakraft durchstroemt oder bewohnt. Das mana des traemenden oder des totengeistes kann in den doppelgaenger bild ueberstroemen, das dank der magischen sympathie eine den lebenden wesen verwandte energie besitzt'), Einstein, *Werke*, vol. 4, 429. No



one has so far suggested that Einstein was even aware of Freud's essay on 'The Uncanny,' no doubt because no trace of its nowadays most popular section, the famous *(un)heimlich/heimisch* discussion, can be found in his work. And yet, it is unthinkable to me that he should not have known a text which, like Einstein at various points in his art-historical notes, explicitly if only in passing ties animism to the magic system of *mana*, to the fear of the shadow and the double, and to Egyptian art's deliberate choice of extremely durable materials for its portrait statues (Freud, 'The Uncanny' [1919], in *Standard Edition*, vol. XVII, 212-252; 240 and 234-235).

⁵¹ Marcel Mauss and Henri Hubert, 'Esquisse d'une théorie générale de la magie' (1902/03); *A General Theory of Magic*, trans. Robert Brain, Routledge, London and New York, 2001, 134-135 (my emphasis).

⁵² Mauss and Hubert, *A General Theory of Magic*, 138.

⁵³ Mauss and Hubert, *A General Theory of Magic*, 144.

⁵⁴ On the philosophy of immanent cause and its (re)emergence in modernity, in such practices as the Futurist city, the literary work of Franz Kafka, and the thought of Georges Bataille, see the remarks by Sanford Kwinter, *Architectures of Time: Toward a Theory of the Event in Modernist Culture*, MIT Press, Cambridge, Mass. and London, 2001, 96, 129 n.42, and *passim*.

⁵⁵ 'Nous constatons une sorte d'animisme formel, à cela près que maintenant la force vivifiante ne vient pas des esprits, mais de l'homme même' (Einstein, 'Notes sur le cubisme,' 155).

⁵⁶ 'Picasso schuf damals [in *The Studio* and *The Painter and His Model*] eine Reihe Figurenbilder, Geschöpfe einer formalen Mythologie, die fern von Kommentaren der formalen Immanenz entspringen' (Einstein, *Die Kunst des 20. Jahrhunderts*, 134; my emphasis in the translation).

⁵⁷ '[I] nous semble que les formes tectoniques, n'étant pas mesurables, sont les formes les plus humaines, parce qu'elles sont les signes d'un homme visuellement actif agençant lui-même son univers et refusant d'être l'esclave des formes données' (Einstein, 'Notes sur le cubisme,' 155; my emphasis in the translation).

⁵⁸ Georges Didi-Huberman, "'Tableau = Coupure': Expérience visuelle, forme et symptôme selon Carl Einstein,' in *Cahiers du Musée national d'art moderne*, 58, Winter 1996, 5-27.

⁵⁹ 'Anti-Hegelianism runs through Nietzsche's work as its cutting edge. We can already feel it in the theory of forces. In Nietzsche the essential relation of one force to another is never conceived of as a negative element in the essence. In its relation with the other the force which makes itself obeyed does not deny the other or that which it is not, it affirms its own difference and enjoys this difference. The negative is not present in the essence as that from which force draws its activity: on the contrary it is a result of activity, of the existence of an active force and the affirmation of its difference. The negative is a product of existence itself: the aggression necessarily linked to an active existence, the aggression of an affirmation.' (Deleuze, *Nietzsche and Philosophy*, 8-9.)

⁶⁰ Besides the well-known Critical Dictionary entries on metamorphosis and metaphor (which latter seeks to redefine metaphor in terms closely related to Maussian magic and medieval cosmology, not to reject it altogether à la Bataille), I am specifically thinking of Leiris's *Documents* texts on Arnold Schoenberg (unpublished at the time) and Hans Arp as well as his review of Fritz Saxl's catalogue of late medieval illuminated manuscripts on astrology. All of them describe the relation between a plane of immanence and the events emerging within it (the human body in the Paracelsean universe, tones in twelve-tone music, the forms of a wood relief) in terms of an interaction of corresponding elements that is very germane indeed to Einstein's appropriation of animism.

⁶¹ See the position paper by Deleuze, which stated the terms of the broadening rift and went unanswered by Foucault: 'Désir et plaisir' (1977), in *Magazine littéraire*, 325, October 1994, 59-65; 'Desire and Pleasure', trans. Daniel W. Smith, in *Foucault and his Interlocutors*, ed. Arnold I. Davidson, University of Chicago Press, Chicago and London, 1997, 183-192. In an extremely perceptive essay Scott Lash summarised their difference as follows: 'The problem is that



Foucault, unlike Deleuze, operates without a developed notion of desire or its equivalent; thus Foucault's body [sc., in the 'Birth' books - SZ] is only the prey of *reactive* forces - normalising and individuating forces - and Foucault's genealogy remains incomplete' ('Genealogy and the Body: Foucault/Deleuze/Nietzsche,' in *Theory, Culture and Society* 2, 2, 1984, 1-17; 7; emphasis mine). In our terms: Deleuze was worried by the way in which Foucault seemed to put the death drive ('normalisation') first, the body second; coercion first, resistance second; *reaction first... and reaction second*.

Sebastian Zeidler is Postdoctoral Mellon Fellow in the Department of History of Art at the University of California, Berkeley. He has previously edited a special issue of *October* magazine on Carl Einstein (2004).

