

**POINT**



The geometric point is an invisible thing. Therefore, it must be defined as an incorporeal thing. Considered in terms of substance, it equals zero.

## **The Geometric Point**

Hidden in this zero, however, are various attributes which are "human" in nature. We think of this zero—the geometric point—in relation to the greatest possible brevity, i.e., to the highest degree of restraint which, nevertheless, speaks.

Thus we look upon the geometric point as the ultimate and most singular **union of silence and speech.**

The geometric point has, therefore, been given its material form, in the first instance, in writing. It belongs to language and signifies silence.

In the flow of speech, the point symbolizes interruption, non-existence (negative element), and at the same time it forms a bridge from one existence to another (positive element). In writing, this constitutes its **inner significance.**

## **The Written Word**

Externally, it is merely a sign serving a useful end and carries with it the element of the "practical-useful," with which we have been acquainted since childhood. The external sign becomes a thing of habit and veils the inner sound of the symbol.

The inner becomes walled-up through the outer.

The point belongs to the more confined circle of habitual everyday phenomena with its traditional sound, which is mute.

The sound of that silence customarily connected with the point is so emphatic that it overshadows the other characteristics.

## **Silence**

All appearances that are traditionally familiar because of their singular expression, become mute to us. We no longer react to their appeal and are surrounded by silence; so we succumb to the deadly grip of "practical-efficiency."

## **Shock**

Sometimes an unusual shock is able to jolt us out of such a lifeless state into vigorous feeling. Frequently, however, the most thorough shaking fails to revitalize the deadly condition. The shocks which come from without (sickness, accident, sorrow, war, revolution) wrench us violently out of the circle of our customary habits for a shorter or a longer time, but such shocks are, as a rule, looked upon as a more or less violent "injustice." Therefore, the desire to re-establish as soon as possible the traditional habits, temporarily abandoned, outweighs all other feelings.

## **From Within**

Disturbances originating from within are of a different character; they are brought about by the human being himself and, therefore, find in him their appropriate foundation. This foundation is not the capacity merely to observe the "street" through the fragile—although hard and firm—"pane of glass," but consists of being able to enter the street. There, the receptive eye and the receptive ear transform the slightest vibrations into impressive experiences. Voices arise from all sides, and the world rings.

Just as an explorer penetrates deeply into new and unknown lands, one makes discoveries in the everyday life, and the erstwhile mute surroundings begin to speak a language which becomes increasingly clear. In this way, the lifeless signs turn into living symbols and the dead is revived.

Naturally, the new science of art can only develop when the signs become symbols and the receptive eye and ear open the way from silence to speech. Let him who is unable to accomplish this, leave both the "theoretic" and the "practical" in art alone; far from building a bridge, those efforts spent on art will, rather, enlarge the present day chasm between mankind and art. It is these very people who are today intent upon placing a period after the word "art."

## **Release**

As we gradually tear the point out of its restricted sphere of customary influence, its inner attributes—which were silent until now—make themselves heard more and more.

One after the other, these qualities—inner tensions— come out of the depths of its being and radiate their energy. Their effects and influence upon human beings overcome ever more easily the resistances they set up. In short, the dead point becomes a living thing.

We will select two typical cases from many possible ones:

1. Let the point be moved out of its practical-useful situation into an impractical, that is, an illogical, position.

**First Case**

Today I am going to the movies.  
Today I am going. To the movies  
Today I. Am going to the movies

It is apparent that it is possible to view the transposition of the point in the second sentence still as a useful one—emphasis upon the destination, stress upon the intention, loud fanfare.

In the third sentence the illogical, in pure form, is at work. This may be explained as a typographical error—the inner value of the point flashes forth for a moment and is immediately extinguished.

2. Let the point be moved so far out of its practical-useful situation that it loses its connection with the flow of the sentence.

**Second Case**

Today I am going to the movies



In this case, the point must have considerable open space around it, in order that its sound may have resonance. In spite of this, its sound remains delicate—overpowered by the sound of the print surrounding it.

As the surrounding space and the size of the point are increased, the sound of the print is reduced and the sound of the point becomes clearer and more powerful (Fig. 1).

**Further Release**



Fig. 1

Thus arises a double sound—print-point—besides the practical-useful association. It is a balancing of two worlds which can never meet or agree. This is a useless, revolutionary state of affairs—the print is shaken by a foreign body which cannot be brought into any relation to it.

**Independent Being**

Nevertheless, the point has been torn out of its customary state and prepares to leap out of one world into another. In the latter, it frees itself from dependency, from the practical-useful. Here it begins its life as an **independent being** and its subordination transforms itself into an inner-purposeful one. This is the world of painting.

**Through Collision**

The point is the result of the initial collision of the tool with the material plane, with the basic plane. Paper, wood, canvas, stucco, metal—may all serve as this basic plane. The tool may be pencil, burin, brush, pen, etching-point, etc. The basic plane is impregnated by this first collision.

**Concept**

The point's **external** concept in painting is not precise. The invisible geometric point must assume a certain proportion when materialized, so as to occupy a certain area of the basic plane. In addition, it must have certain boundaries or outlines to separate it from its surroundings.

This goes without saying and appears very simple at first. But even in this simple case, one immediately runs up against inaccuracies which indicate the embryonic state of the art theory of today.

As the **sizes** and shapes of the point change, the relative sound of the abstract point likewise is altered.

**Externally**, the point may be defined as the smallest elementary form, but this definition is not exact. It is difficult to fix the exact limits of the concept "smallest form." The point can grow and cover the entire ground plane unnoticed—then, where would the boundary between point and plane be?

There are two considerations to be borne in mind here:

1. the relation of the size of the point to the size of the plane, and
2. the relative sizes of the point and of the other forms on this plane.

A form which, when on the otherwise empty basic plane, may still be considered to be a point, must be termed a plane when, for example, a very thin line appears with it upon the basic plane (Fig. 2).



Fig. 2

The relation of sizes in the first and second case determines the conception of the point which, at present, can be tested on the basis of feeling only—since we lack an exact numerical expression for it.



**At the  
Boundary**

Only by feeling, are we able to determine when the point is approaching its extreme limit and to evaluate this. This approach to the external boundary—indeed, the crossing of it somewhat, the attainment of that moment when the point, as such, begins to disappear and the plane in its stead embarks upon its embryonic existence—this instant of transition is a means to the end.

**Abstract  
Form**

In this case, the end is the **veiling** of the absolute sound of the form: the emphasis on its dissolution, the note of imprecision in it, the instability, the positive movement (or the negative, as the case may be), the flickering, the tension, the abnormality in the abstraction, the risk of inner overlapping (the inner sounds of the point and the plane collide with each other, fuse, and then recoil), a dual note in a single form—that is, the creation of a double sound by a **single** form. The multiplicity and complexity in expression of the "smallest" form attained, after all, by slight changes in its size, serve to the receptive mind as a plausible example of the power and depth of expression of abstract forms. Upon further development of this means of expression in the future, and further development of the receptivity of the observer, more precise concepts will be necessary, and these will surely, in time, be attained through measurement. Expression in numerical terms will here be indispensable.

**Numerical  
Expression  
and  
Formulae**

There resides in this only one danger: that the numerical expression may lag behind the sensory perception and that it may, thereby, inhibit it. A formula is very much like glue. It is also akin to flypaper to which the foolish fall victims. It is like an overstuffed chair which embraces one in its warm arms. On the other hand, the struggle to free oneself from the bonds of usage is the necessary preparation for the further spring to new values and, finally, to new formulae. Even formulae become obsolete, to be replaced by new-born formulae.

**Form**

The second inevitable fact concerns the outer limit of the point which determines its **external form**.

Abstractly or imaginatively, the point is thought of as ideally small, ideally round. In actuality, it is an ideally small circle. Nevertheless, just



as in the case of its size, its limits are equally relative. In its material form, the point can assume an unlimited number of shapes: it can become jagged, it can move in the direction of other geometric forms, and finally develop into entirely free shapes. It can be pointed and tend towards the triangular. Or, prompted by an urge for relative immobility, it can take on the shape of a square. When it has a jagged edge, the elongated projections can be of smaller or larger size and take on a relationship to one another. Here no boundaries can be fixed and the realm of points is unlimited (Fig. 3).



Fig. 3  
Examples of point forms.

Therefore, depending on the size and form, the basic sound of the point is variable. This variability should, nevertheless, be understood in no other sense than as a relative innermost colouration of the basic inner nature, which yet rings its pure tone.

**Basic  
Sound**

It must, however, always be emphasized that elements completely pure in tone which radiate a single colour do not really exist; that even those elements designated as "basic" or "proto-elements" are not primitive but are, on the contrary, of a complex nature. All concepts having to do with the "primitive" are likewise only relative concepts. Our "scientific" language is, therefore, equally but relative. The absolute we do not know.

**Absolute  
Concepts**

## Inner Concept

At the beginning of this chapter, in the course of the discussion of the practical-useful value of the point in written language, the point was defined as a concept linked with the idea of silence of shorter or longer duration.

The **point**, as such, makes a certain **statement** which is organically bound up with the utmost **restraint**.

**The point is the innermost concise form.**

It is turned inwards. It never completely loses this characteristic—even when it assumes, externally, an angular shape.

## Tension

Its tension is, even in its last analysis, **concentric**—also, in cases where it exhibits eccentric tendencies, whereby arises a double resonance of the concentric and the eccentric.

The point is a small world cut off more or less equally from all sides and almost torn out of its surroundings. Its fusion with the surroundings is minimal, and seems to be non-existent in cases of perfected roundness. On the other hand, it maintains itself firmly in place and reveals not the slightest tendency to movement in any direction whatsoever, either horizontal or vertical. Furthermore, it neither advances nor recedes. Only its concentric tension discloses its inner kinship with the circle—while its further characteristics rather point to the square.<sup>1</sup>

## Plane

## Definition

The point digs itself into the plane and asserts itself for all time. Thus it presents the **briefest, constant, innermost assertion**: short, fixed and quickly created.

Therefore, the point, in its outer and inner sense, is the **proto-element of painting** and especially of the "graphic."<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> For the relationship between colour and form elements consult my article "Die Grundelemente der Form" in "Staatl. Bauhaus 1919-1923," Bauhaus-Verlag, Weimar-Munich, p. 26 and colour plate V.

<sup>2</sup> There is a geometric designation of the point by means of an "O" meaning "origo," that is, "beginning" or "origin." The geometric and the pictorial views coincide. The point, when looked upon as a symbol, is also termed the "proto-element." ("Das Zeichenbuch" by Rudolph Koch, II Edition, Verlag W. Gerstung, Offenbach a. M., 1926.)

The concept, element, can be understood in two different ways: as an external, and, as an inner concept.

Externally, each individual graphic or pictorial form is an element. Inwardly, it is not this form itself but, rather, the tension within it, which constitutes the element.

In fact, no materializing of external forms expresses the content of a work of painting but, rather, the forces=tensions which are alive within it.<sup>1</sup>

If by some magic command these tensions were to disappear or to expire, the work, which is alive at that very instant, would die. On the other hand, every accidental grouping of several forms could be called a work of art. The content of a work of art finds its expression in the composition: that is, in the sum of the tensions inwardly organized for the work.

This seemingly simple statement has a highly important, fundamental significance: it divides into these two opposing groups not only the present day artists, but the present day men altogether, depending on their acceptance or rejection of it:

1. those persons who recognize not only material things but also the existence of the immaterial or spiritual, and
2. those who choose to accept nothing beyond material evidence.

For the second category, art cannot exist and, consequently, these people today repudiate the very word "art" while seeking a substitute for it.

To my way of thinking, one might distinguish element from "element": that is, the term "element" would signify the form separated from the inner tension, and by element, the tension alive within this form. The elements are, therefore, in reality abstract, while the form is in itself "abstract." If it were actually possible to work with abstract elements, the external form of contemporary painting would become radically

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<sup>1</sup> See Heinrich Jacoby, "Jenseits von 'musikalisch' und 'unmusikalisch'," Stuttgart, Verlag F. Enke, 1925. Difference between "matter" and "sound-energy" (p. 48).

altered. Nevertheless, this would not mean that painting as a whole would become superfluous: even the abstract elements of painting would retain their pictorial colouration as do the elements of music.

## **Time**

Lack of joyous mobility on and off the surface, reduces the time limit of perception to a minimum; the element of time in the point is almost completely eliminated which, in special cases of composition, makes the point inevitable. Its use here corresponds to the sharp blow on a kettle-drum or a triangle in music, or to the short taps of the woodpecker in nature.

## **The Point in Painting**

Even at present there exist some art theorists who look askance at the use of point or line in painting. They would like to see the many venerable barriers preserved, which until recently isolated with apparent finality two fields of art from each other—that of painting and that of the graphics. At all events, there exists no **inner** reason for this separation.<sup>1</sup>

## **Time in Painting**

Time, in painting, is a question in itself and is very complex. Here as well the barrier began to dwindle several years ago.<sup>2</sup> This barrier hitherto had divided two fields of art—that of painting from that of music.

The apparently clear and justifiable division:  
painting—space (plane)  
music—time

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<sup>1</sup> The reason for this division is an external one and it would be more logical, if a more exact definition is necessary, to divide painting into hand-painting and print-painting, which would quite correctly point to the technical origin of art works. The term "graphic" has lost its clarity—it is not uncommon for watercolour to be classified with the graphics which is sufficient proof of the confusion in our thoughtless, habitual use of conceptions. A watercolour painted by hand is a work of painting or, to designate it more exactly, of hand-painting. This same watercolour, reproduced exactly by means of lithography, still is a work of painting but, to be precise, of print-painting. To make a real distinction, one could add the terms "black-and-white" or "colour" painting.

<sup>2</sup> The "All-Russian Academy of the Science of Art" in Moscow, for example, took some steps in this direction in the year 1920.



has upon closer, though yet hasty, examination suddenly become doubtful and, as far as I know, this first became apparent to the painters.<sup>1</sup> The tendency to overlook the time element in painting today still persists, revealing clearly the superficiality of prevailing art theory, which noisily rejects any scientific basis. This is not the place to cope with this question at greater length—yet a few considerations which throw a clear light upon this time element must be emphasized.

### **The point is temporally the briefest form.**

In theory, the point, which is

1. a complex (size and form) and
2. a sharply-defined unit,

should constitute to some degree its relationship with the basic plane as a sufficient means of expression. Theoretically, a work of art can, in its final analysis, consist of a point. This should not be looked upon as an idle statement.

**Number of  
Elements  
in an  
Art Work**

When, today, the theorist (who often proves to be a "practicing" painter as well) attempts to systematize the art elements and is compelled to take special pains to separate and investigate the basic elements, he also has to consider the question of how these elements are to be used, as well as the number necessary for a work of art, even if purely theoretic in character.

This relates to the great, but still veiled, question of the theory of composition. Here, too, one must proceed in a consistent and schematic manner and must start at the beginning. This book is intended to present only a short analysis of the two primary form elements, and to suggest the connection with the general scientific working programme in pointing the direction to a general science of art.

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<sup>1</sup> When I finally became converted to abstract art, the time element in painting became incontestably clear to me and since then I have used it in practice.

In this sense, we will treat the question which has been raised as to whether or not a point suffices to form a work of art.

We have here various cases and possibilities.

The simplest and briefest is that of the centrally-placed point—of the **point lying in the center** of a surface which is square in shape (Fig. 4).

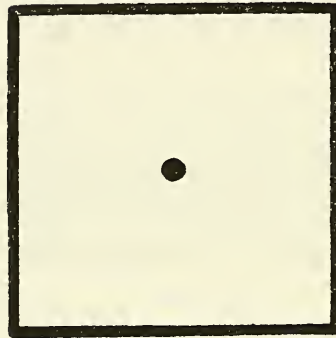


Fig. 4

### Prototype

The restriction of the basic effect of the plane here becomes intensified and this constitutes a unique case.<sup>1</sup> As the double sound—point, plane—takes on the character of a **single sound**, the sound of the plane is relatively too slight to be noticeable. This, on the road to simplification, is the last stage in the progressive dissolution of multiple and double sounds through elimination of all complicated elements—reducing the composition to the single proto-element. This, therefore, represents the **prototype of pictorial expression**.

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<sup>1</sup> This observation will be clarified more fully in the section of the book which deals with the basic plane.



My definition of the concept "composition" is as follows:

## Concept of Com- position

### **A composition is the inwardly-purposeful subordination**

1. of the individual elements and
2. of the build-up (construction)  
**toward the goal of concrete pictoriality.**

Also, when a single sound completely embodies the pictorial aim, this single sound must be considered the equivalent of a composition. The single sound here is a composition.<sup>1</sup>

## Single Sound as Com- position

When the differences in compositions are considered externally, the pictorial aims, exclusively, are to be equated with the numerical differences. These are quantitative differences, while it goes without saying that in the case of the "prototype of pictorial expression," the qualitative element is completely lacking. When the work of art is estimated on a decidedly **qualitative basis**, a double sound at least is necessary to the composition. This is one of the cases which clearly emphasizes the difference between external and inner measures and means. We find upon closer examination that altogether pure double sounds never really occur; this statement must remain an assertion only, to be proven later. At all events, a composition can be created on a qualitative basis only through the use of multiple sounds.

## Basis

At the moment the point is moved from the center of the basic plane—eccentric structure—the double sound becomes audible:

## Eccentric Structure

1. absolute sound of the point,
2. sound of the given location in the basic plane.

This second sound, which in the case of the centric structure was almost silenced, again becomes distinct and transforms the sound of the point from the absolute to the relative.

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<sup>1</sup> Bound up with this question is a special "modern" question "Can a work be created by purely mechanical means?" In cases of the most primitive numerical problems, this must be answered in the affirmative.

### **Quantita- tive Increase**

A counterpart of this point on the basic plane will produce a still more complex result. Repetition is a potent means of heightening the inner vibration and is, at the same time, a source of elementary rhythm which, in turn, is a means to the attainment of elementary harmony in every form of art. Aside from this, we have to deal here with two double sounds: every part of the basic plane has a sound peculiar to itself and an individual inner colouration. As a result, facts of apparently little importance produce consequences of unexpected complexity.

The inventory of the given example is:

Elements: two points + plane.

Result:

1. inner sound of a point,
2. repetition of the sound,
3. double sound of the first point,
4. double sound of the second point,
5. sound of the sum of all these sounds.

Since, moreover, the point is a complex unit (its size plus its shape), it is easy to imagine what a storm of sounds can develop from a continuing accumulation of points on the basic plane—even when these points are identical; and how this turmoil develops and spreads out, while its further course points to the ever-growing disparity in the size and form of the points which are projected upon the plane.

### **Nature**

Also, in nature's unmixed realm, this accumulation of points occurs frequently; it is invariably purposeful and organically necessary. These nature forms are in reality small space particles and carry the same relationship to the abstract (geometric) point as to the pictorial. However, the whole "world" can, on the other hand, be looked upon as a self-contained cosmic composition which, in turn, is composed of an endless number of independent compositions, always self-contained even when getting smaller and smaller. In the final analysis, all of these—large or small, have been



Fig. 5  
Star cluster of Hercules. (Newcomb-Engelmann's  
"Popul. Astronomie," Leipzig, 1921, p. 294.)



originated from points, to which point—in its original geometric essence—everything returns. These are complexes of geometric points which, in various configurations determined by physical laws, float in geometric infinity. The smallest, self-contained, wholly centrifugal shapes actually appear to the naked eye as points seemingly loosely related to each other. Many seeds appear like this. In opening the beautiful, highly-polished, ivory-like head of the poppy (in reality a somewhat large spherical point), we discover heaps of cold blue-grey points arranged according to physical law so as to form an ordered composition, and which carry within themselves the latently dormant generative power, as powerful as the pictorial point.

Frequently, such forms arise in nature through the dismemberment and decomposition of the above-mentioned complexes—the beginning, so to speak, of a return to the primordial form of the geometric state. If the desert is a sea of sand made up entirely out of points, the effect of the uncontrollably-violent tendency of these "dead" points to shift is, not without reason, terrifying.

And so also in nature, the point is a self-contained thing, full of possibilities (Figs. 5 and 6).



Fig. 6

Nitrate-forming nodule, enlarged 1000 times.  
("Kultur d. Gegenwart," part III, section IV, 3, p. 71.)

## Other Art Expressions

Points are to be met with in all of the art expressions and certainly artists will become increasingly conscious of their inner power. This significance should not be overlooked.

## Sculpture and Architecture

In **sculpture** and **architecture**, the point results from a cross-section of several planes—it is the termination of an angle in space and, on the other hand, the originating nucleus of these planes which can be guided back to it or can be developed out of it. In Gothic buildings, points are sharply emphasized, frequently by plastic means. In Chinese buildings, this is accomplished with means of equal clarity as curves leading to the point—in short, precise beats audible as a transition of dissolution in which the space form fades away into the atmosphere surrounding the building. Especially in the case of such buildings can we assume a conscious use of the point, since the architectural masses are divided systematically into points whose tendency in composition is to lead toward the highest peak. Peak=point (Figs. 7 and 8).

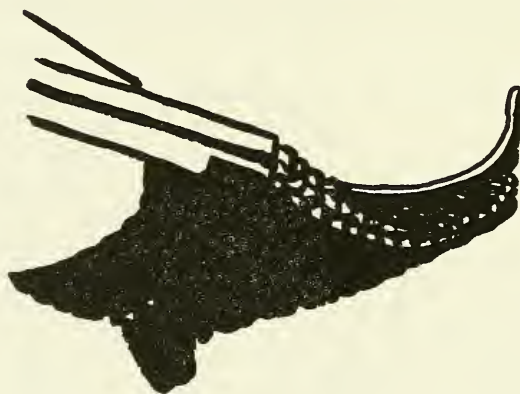


Fig. 7

Ling-ying-si Gate.

("China" by Bernd Melchers, vol. 2, Folkwang Verlag, Hagen i. W., 1922.)



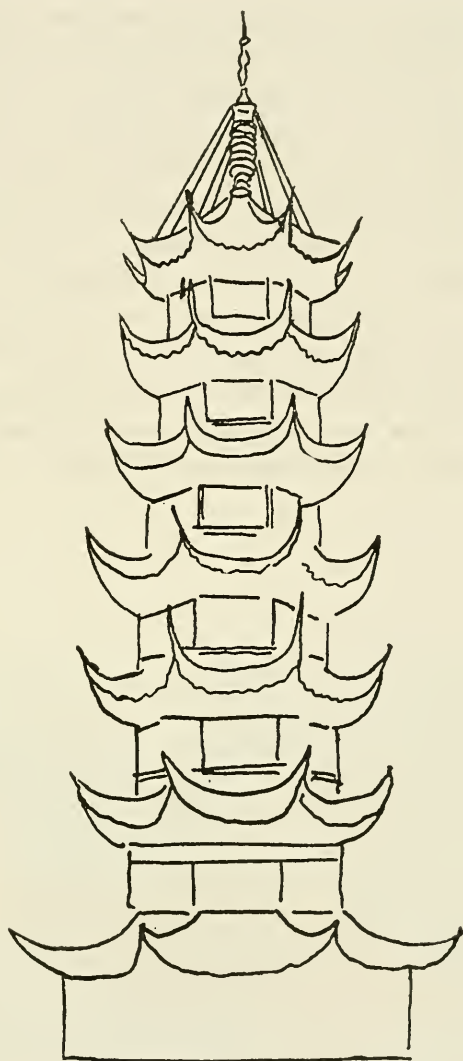


Fig. 8  
"Pagoda of the Dragon Beauty" in Shanghai (built in 1411).

**The Dance** Already in the classical **ballet form** existed "points" — a designated terminology which unquestionably is derived from "point." The rapid running on the toes leaves behind on the floor a trace of points. The ballet dancer leaps to a point above, clearly aiming at it with his head and, in landing, again contacts a point on the floor. High leaps in the **modern dance** can, in some cases, be compared with the "classic" ballet's high leap; that, whereas the leap formerly pointed to a straight, vertical direction, the "modern" leap frequently forms a five-pointed plane with its five extremities—head, two feet and two hands, whereby the ten fingers form ten smaller points (e.g., the dancer Palucca, Fig. 9). Furthermore, the brief states of rigid immobility can be looked upon as points. Thus we have active and passive point formations which bear a relationship to the musical form of the point.

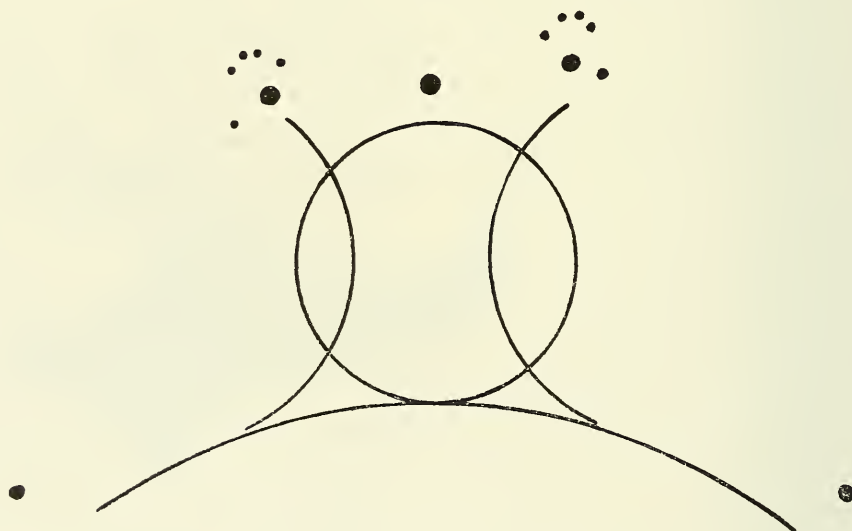
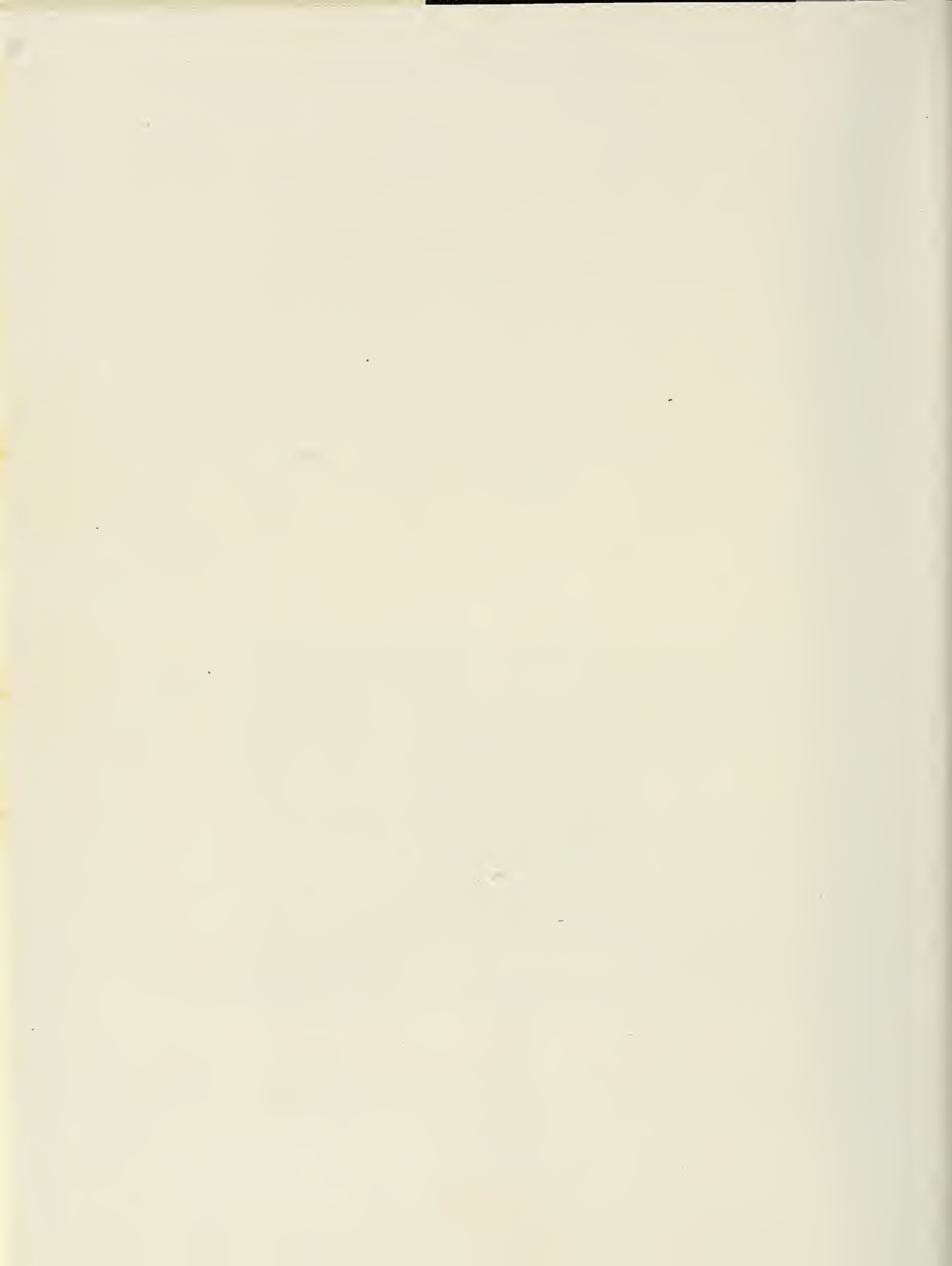


Fig. 10

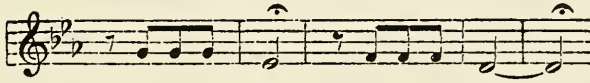


Fig. 9  
A leap of the dancer Palucca.



In addition to the beating of the kettle-drum and striking of the triangle, of which we have already spoken, points can be produced in music with all sorts of instruments—especially the percussion instruments. The piano, however, enables the creation of finished compositions exclusively by means of the combination and the sequence of tonal points.<sup>1</sup>

Strings and piano



Beethoven's 5th Symphony (the first measures).

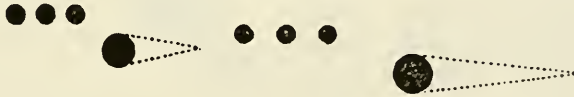
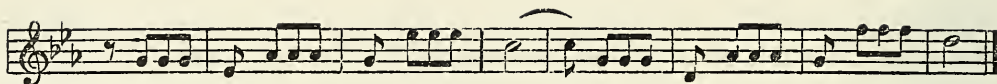


Fig. 11

The above music translated into points.

<sup>1</sup> It is clearly evident that certain musicians also have been more or less consciously attracted by the magnetic power of the point, which can be distinctly recognized through its inner tension as demonstrated by the so-called subconscious "hallucination" of Bruckner, whose meaning had been detected and described: "How could this (his interest in the effect of points after signatures or on doorplates) have been a derangement of his spirit, when it seems that it was no wandering mind which investigated these points—especially if one understands Bruckner's nature and the manner in which he searched for knowledge as indicated in his studies of the theory of music? It becomes apparent that psychological significance resides in the fact that he was attracted to the reclining proto-unit of all spatial expansion's origin. He sought everywhere for the ultimate inner points, to reach this final analysis out of which, in his opinion, originates the infinity of vast dimensions, impossible without its originating extension point." "Bruckner" by Dr. Ernst Kurth, vol. I, p. 110, footnote. Max Hesses Verlag, Berlin.



**Fig. 11**

The above music translated into points.



**Fig. 11**

The above music translated into points.



Theme 2

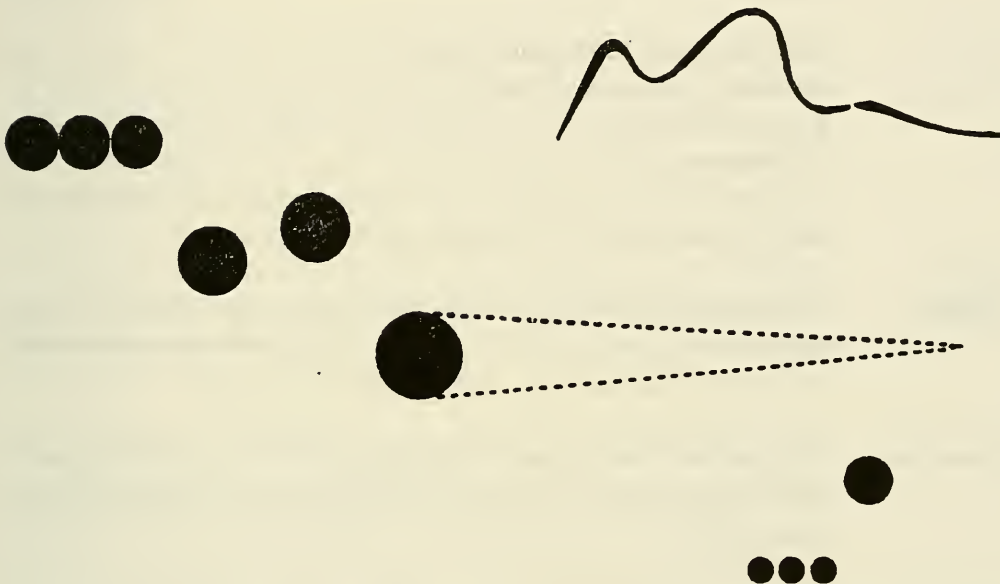


Fig. 11<sup>1</sup>

Theme 2 translated into points.

<sup>1</sup> In making these translations, I received the valuable aid of Music Superintendent Franz v. Hoesslin and for this I extend to him my heartfelt gratitude.

## **Graphic Art**

In that particular field of painting known as **graphic**, the point develops its autonomous powers with special clarity: the material tools offer to these powers many different possibilities in the way of diversity of form and size, which establishes the point in countless entities with different sound values.

## **Techniques**

Even here, this multiplicity and diversity are easily classified when the special characteristics of the graphic techniques are used in this classification.

The typical graphic techniques are:

1. etching, particularly dry-point,
2. the woodcut, and
3. lithography.

The differences between these three techniques stand out with exceptional clarity in connection with the point and its creation.

## **Etching**

In **etching**, naturally, the smallest black point can be obtained with the greatest of ease while, on the other hand, only with considerable effort and various tricks can a large white point be obtained.

## **Woodcut**

The situation in the **woodcut** is entirely opposite. The smallest white points need only one stab. It is the large black point which demands effort and consideration.

## **Lithography**

In **lithography** both roads are equally smooth and effort is eliminated.

Likewise, the possibilities of making corrections differ in these three techniques: in etching, strictly speaking, correction is impossible; in the woodcut it is restricted and, in lithography, it is unlimited.

## **Atmosphere**

It should be evident from this comparison of the three techniques, that the lithographic process was bound to be the last discovered; in fact, since the discovery did not take place until "today," facility cannot be attained without effort. On the other hand, ease in creating and ease in correcting are characteristics which are particularly suited to the present day. The

present day is only a springboard to "tomorrow" and only in this role can it be accepted with innermost tranquility.

No natural difference can or should remain superficial—it must point to the profound depth, that is, to the inner life of things. Likewise, technical possibilities grow in just as functional and purposeful a manner as any other potentiality, whether it be in "material" life (spruce tree, lion, star, louse) or in the spiritual realm (art work, moral principle, scientific method, religious idea).

Even though on the surface the individual appearances of plants differ so greatly from each other that their inner relationship remains obscured—even though these phenomena seem chaotic to the superficial eye—they can, nevertheless, on the basis of their common **inner necessity**, be traced back to the same root.

**Root**

It is in this manner that one learns the value of differences which, although they always are originally purposeful and well-founded, avenge themselves frightfully in monstrous abortions when they are handled in a frivolous manner.

**False  
Ways**

This simple fact can readily be observed in the more restricted field of the graphics—the failure to understand the basic differences in the above-mentioned technical potentialities has repeatedly lead to useless and, therefore, repulsive works. They owe their existence to the inability of recognizing the inner life behind the external appearance of things—the soul, hardened like an empty nutshell, has lost its capacity to penetrate any longer the depths of things where the pulsebeat, beneath the outer husk, becomes audible.

The specialists of 19th Century graphics were not infrequently proud of their ability to make a woodcut resemble a pen drawing, or a lithograph look like an etching. Works of this sort can be designated only as testimonials of spiritual poverty. The cock's crowing, the door's creaking, the dog's barking, however cleverly imitated on a violin, can never be estimated as artistic accomplishments.

**Means** Hand-in-hand with the **materials** and **tools** of these three techniques goes, naturally, the necessity of realizing the three different characteristics of the point.

**Material** While paper can be used as material for these three different techniques, the relation of the particular tool in each case is fundamentally different. This accounts for the continued existence, side by side, down to the present day of these three techniques.

**Tools and Origin of the Point** Of the various kinds of etching, **drypoint** is used by preference today because it harmonizes especially well with the present day atmosphere of haste, and because it possesses the incisive character of precision. The basic plane can here remain entirely white, and in this white the points and lines lie deeply and sharply embedded. The etching-needle works definitely and with the greatest determination and bores eagerly into the plate. The point is created first in the negative through a short, precise prick in the plate.

The needle is pointed metal—cold.

The plate is smooth copper—warm.

The colour is applied thickly on the entire plate and wiped off in such a manner that the small point remains lying simply and naturally in the lap of brightness.

The pressure of the press is powerful. The plate eats its way into the paper. The paper penetrates the smallest depressions and tears out the colour. It is an impassioned process which leads to the complete fusion of the colour with the paper.

Thus, the small black point—the pictorial proto-element—is here created.

#### **Woodcut:**

Tools: a plane made of metal—cold.

Plate: of wood (e.g., boxwood)—warm.

The point is created in such a way that the instrument does not touch it—the point is encircled—like a fortress—with a ditch, and great care is taken not to injure it. In order that the point may enter the world, it is necessary to do violence to its entire surroundings; to tear them out and destroy them.

The colour is rolled onto the surface in such a way that it covers the point and leaves the surrounding area free. The future print can already be clearly seen upon the block.

The pressure of the press is light—the paper must not make its way into the depressions, but must remain upon the surface. The small point does not sit in the paper, but on the paper. It remains for its inner forces to claw their way into the surface.

### **Lithography:**

The plate: stone, clay of an indefinable yellow—warm.

The tools: pen, crayon, brush, any more or less pointed object with surfaces of contact of the most varied sizes. Lastly, a fine atomizer (spray technique). Great diversity, great flexibility.

The colour rests lightly and insecurely. Its union with the block is very loose and it can easily be removed by grinding—the stone returns immediately to its original chaste condition.

The point is there in a moment—with the speed of lightning, without effort and loss of time—only a brief, superficial contact.

The pressure of the press—fleeting. The paper touches impartially the entire block and reflects only the parts which have been fructified.

The point sits so lightly upon the paper that it would not be surprising if it were to fly off it.

This is the way the point sits:  
in the etching—in the paper,  
in the woodcut—in and on the paper,  
in the lithograph—on the paper.



It is in this manner that the three graphic techniques differ from each other, and in this manner that they are mutually interwoven.

Thus, the point—remaining always a point—takes on different aspects and is, thereby, a changing expression.

## **Texture**

These last remarks relate to the special question of **texture**.

The term "texture" signifies the manner in which the elements are externally combined with each other and with the basic plane. This mode of combination depends on three factors which may be classified schematically as follows:

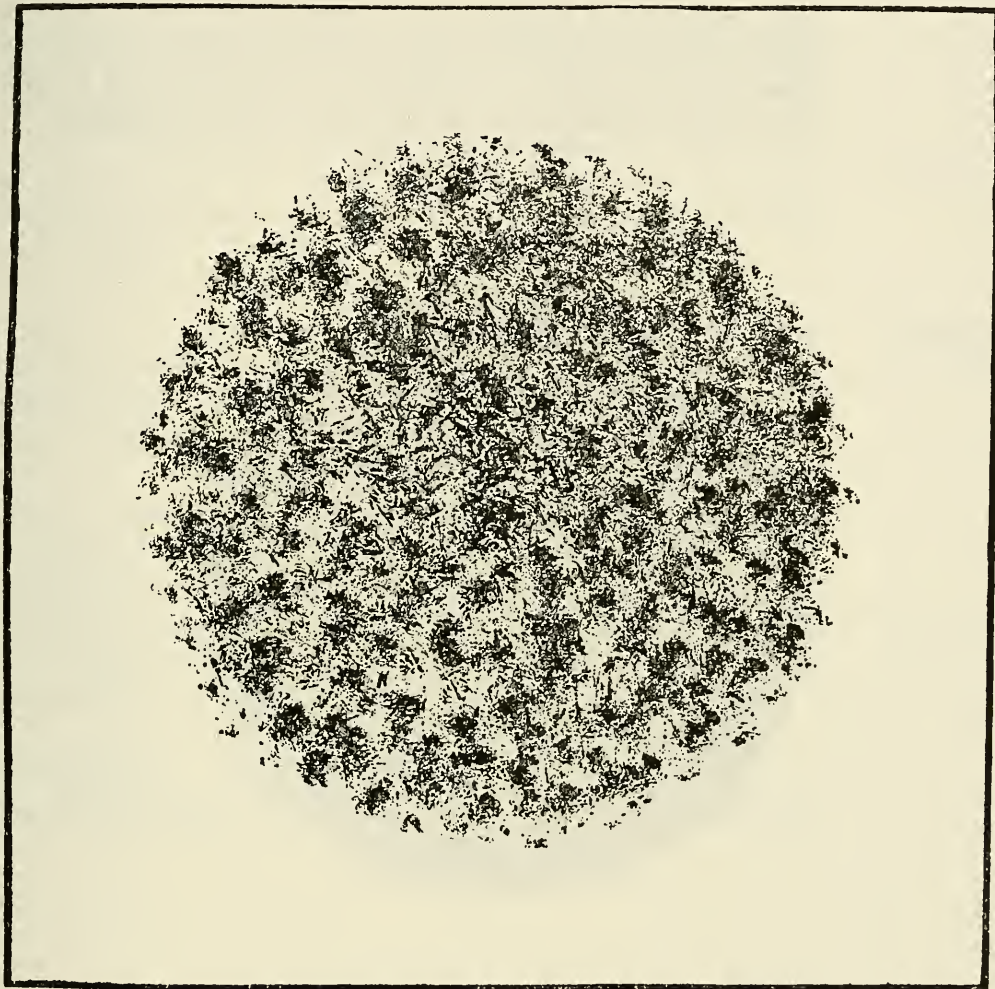
1. according to the character of the given space which may be smooth, rough, flat, plastic, etc.,
2. according to the type of tool, whereby the one in common use today in painting—the brush of various types—may be supplanted by other tools, and
3. according to the manner of application: the colour may be laid on loosely, compactly, by stippling, by spraying, etc., depending upon its consistency—this accounts for the difference in binding media, pigments, etc.

Even in the very limited field of the point, attention should be given to texture possibilities (Figs. 12 and 13). Despite the narrowly drawn confines of this smallest of elements, the different means of producing it are, nevertheless, of importance, since the sound of the point takes on each time a different colouration in accordance with the manner of its creation.

We have, therefore, to consider:

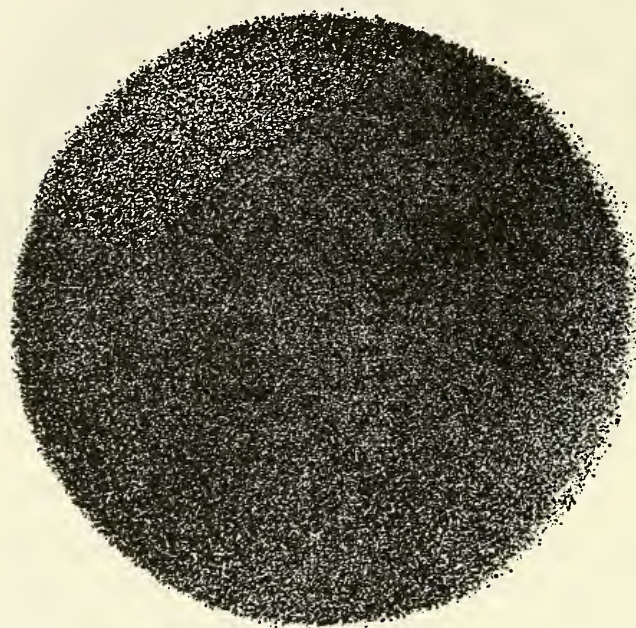
1. the character of the point as determined by the tool used to make it in combination with the nature of the surface receiving it (in this case, the type of plate),
2. the character of the point in the way of its union with the surface finally receiving it (in this case, the paper),
3. the character of the point as it depends upon the qualities of this definite surface itself (in this case, smooth, granular, striated, rough paper).





**Fig. 12**  
Concentric complex of points of free form.

When a piling-up of points is necessary, the three cases just cited will become still further complicated by the manner of producing this accumulation of points—whether this accumulation be created directly by hand or by more or less mechanical means (all sorts of spray techniques).



**Fig. 13**

A large point formed out of small points (spray technique).

Naturally, all of these possibilities play a still greater role in painting;<sup>1</sup> the difference here lies in the individuality of the pictorial means which offers infinitely more possibilities for texture than the narrow field of the graphics.

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<sup>1</sup> This question cannot be discussed more at length here.

Nevertheless, even in this restricted realm, considerations of texture retain their full significance. Texture is a means to an end and it must be looked upon as such and so used. In other words, texture must not become an end in itself; it must serve the idea residing in the composition (purpose), just as does every other element (means). Otherwise, an inner disharmony arises in which the means drown out the end. The external has taken over the inner—mannerism.

In this case may be seen one of the differences between "objective" and abstract art. In the former, the sound of the element "in itself" is veiled, thrust back; when abstract, it attains its full, unveiled sound. The small point, especially, is able to give incontestable testimony of this.

## **Abstract Art**

In the field of the "objective" graphic, there are prints composed entirely of points (a famous "Head of Christ" can be mentioned as an example) in which the points are intended to produce the effect of lines. It is clear that this is an unjustifiable use of the point, since the latter, stifled by the representation and with its inner sound weakened, is condemned to a poverty-stricken half-life.<sup>1</sup>

For the abstract, a certain technique can, of course, serve a definite purpose and be necessary to the composition. Proofs of this are self-evident.

Everything which in very general terms has been said here about the point, has to do with the analysis of the self-contained, stationary point. Changes in its size bring with them corresponding changes in its character. In this

## **Force from Within**

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<sup>1</sup> A quite different case is the division of a surface into points which is dictated by technical necessity as, for example, in zincography, where the division of the surface into points by the screen is unavoidable—the point is not intended here to play an independent role and, to the extent that the technique permits this, it is deliberately repressed.

case, however, it grows out of itself; out of its own center; and only a relative diminution of its concentric tension results.

**Force from  
Without**

There exists still another force which develops not within the point, but outside of it. This force hurls itself upon the point which is digging its way into the surface, tears it out and pushes it about the surface in one direction or another. The concentric tension of the point is thereby immediately destroyed and, as a result, it perishes and a new being arises out of it which leads a new, independent life in accordance with its own laws. This is the Line.