

The Building Concept of the Goetheanum

GA 289

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Automated Translation

6. Guided tour of the Goetheanum

I would like to say a few words about the building concept, with the direct support of the building. From the outset, the view could arise that if one has to talk about such a building, it indicates that it does not make the necessary impression as an artistic work; and in many cases, what is thought about the building of Dornach, about the Goetheanum in the world, is thought from a false point of view influenced by a [one-sided] view. For example, the opinion has been spread that the building in Dornach wants to symbolize all kinds of things, that it is a symbolizing building. In reality, you will not find a single symbol in it when you look at it, as they are popular in mystical and theosophical societies. The building should be able to be experienced entirely from the ki-based feeling and has also been created from these artistic feelings in its forms, in all its details. Therefore, it must only work through what it is itself.

Explaining has become popular, and one then complies with such requests for explanations; but in mentioning this here before you, I also say that such an explanation of an artistic work always seems to me to be not only half, but almost completely unartistic, and that I will now give you a kind of lecture in front of the building, a lecture that I fundamentally dislike, if only because I have to speak to you in abstract terms about what emerged in my mind as details when designing the building, the models and so on, and what was created from life. I would rather speak to you about the building as little as possible.

It is already the case that a new style, a new artistic form of expression, is viewed with a certain mistrust in the present day. I can still hear a word that I heard many decades ago when I was studying at the Technical University [in Vienna], where Ferstel gave his lectures. In one of them, he says: "Architectural styles are not invented, an architectural style grows out of the character of a nation." Therefore, Ferstel is also opposed to any invention of a desired new architectural style, a new type of construction. What is true about this idea is that the style, which is supposed to stylize the characteristics of a people, must emerge not from an abstrac-

tion, but from a living world view, which is at the same time a world experience and, from this point of view, comprehensively encompasses the chaotic spiritual life of contemporary humanity. On the basis of this thoroughly correct idea, it becomes necessary to transform what was characteristic of previous architectural styles into organic building forms by incorporating the symmetrical, the geometric-static, and so on.

I am well aware of what can be said – and, from a certain point of view, justifiably said – by those who have become psychologically attuned to previous architectural styles against what has been attempted here in Dornach as an architectural style: the transference of geometrical-symmetrical-static forms into organic forms. But it has been attempted. And so you can see in these forms of building that this building here is an as yet inadequate first attempt to express the transition from these geometric forms of building to the organic. It is certain, of course, that the development of humanity is moving towards these forms of building, and when we again have the impulses of clairvoyant experience, I believe that these forms of building will play the first, leading role.

This building should be understood in the same way through its relationship with the organizing forces of nature as the previous buildings are understood through their relationship with the geometric-static-symmetrizing forces of nature. This building is to be viewed from this point of view, and from this point of view you will understand how every detail within the building idea for Dornach must be completely individualized here. Just think of your earlobe: it is a very small part of the human organism, but you cannot imagine that an organic form like the earlobe is suitable for growing on the big toe. This organ is bound to its place within the organism. Just as you find that within the whole organism a supporting organ is always shaped in such a way that it can have a static-dynamic effect within the organism, so too the individual forms in our building in Dornach had to be such that they could serve the static-dynamic forces. Every single form had to be organized in such a way that it could and had to be in its place what it now appears to be. Look at each arch from this point of view, how it is formed, how it flattens out towards the exit, for example, how it curves inwards towards the building itself, where it not only has to support but also to express support in an organic way, thereby helping to develop what only appears to be unnecessary in organic formation. Ordinary architecture leaves out what the organism develops, that which goes beyond the static. But one senses that the idea of building has been transferred to the organic design of the forms, and that this is also necessary.

You will have to consider every column from this point of view; then you will also understand that the ordinary column, which is taken out of the geometric-static, has been replaced by one that does not imitate the organic - everything is so that it is not imitated naturalistically - but

transferred into organically made structures. It is not imitating an organic structure. You will not find it if you look for a model in nature. But you will find it if you understand how human beings can live together with the forces that have an organizing effect in nature, and how, apart from what nature itself creates, such organizing forms can arise. So you will see in these column supports how the expansion of the structure, the support, the inward pointing, and, in the same way as, say, in the upper end of the human thigh, the support, the walking, the walking and so on, is embodied statically, but organically and statically.

From this point of view, I would also ask you to consider something like the structure with the three perpendicular formations at the top of the stairs here below (Figs. 23, 24). The feeling arises here of how a person feels when he is striving to ascend the stairs. He must have a feeling of security, of spiritual unity in all that goes on in this building, indeed in all that he sees in this building. Everything came to me entirely from my feelings. Believe it or not, this form came to me entirely from my artistic feelings. As I said, you may believe it or not, it was only afterwards that it occurred to me that this form is somewhat reminiscent of the form of the three semicircular circles in the human ear, which, when injured, cause fainting, so that they immediately express what gives a person stability. This expression, that a person should be given stability in this building, comes about in the experience of the three perpendicular directions. This can be experienced in this structure without having to engage in abstract thought. One can remain entirely in the artistic realm.

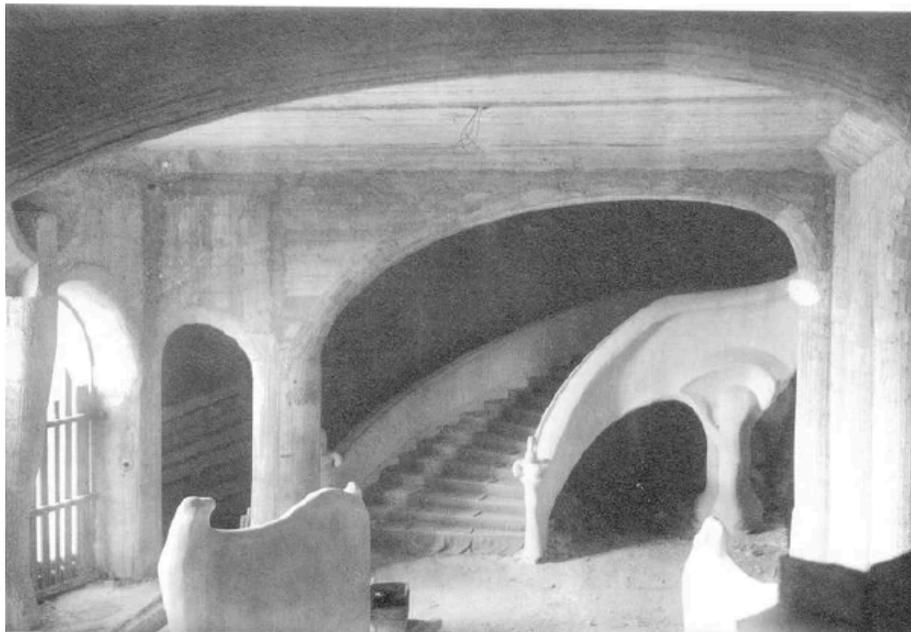


Figure 23



Figure 24

If you look at the wall-like structures, you will find that natural-looking forces have been poured into the forms, but in such a way that in these forms, which are radiator covers (Fig. 26), the concrete material of the structure is worked out first, and then, further up, the material of the wood, so that they are metamorphosed. You will find that in these structures, the process of metamorphosis is elevated to the artistic. It is the idea of the building that should have a definite effect on such radiator covers, which are designed in such a way that you immediately feel the purpose and do not need to explore it intellectually first. This is how these elementary forms, half plant-like, half animal-like, came to be felt. One only realizes that they must be so when one has shaped them out of the material. And it also follows that it is necessary to metamorphose them depending on whether they are in one place or another, depending on whether they are long and low or narrower and higher. All this is not the result of calculating the form, but the forms shape themselves out of the feeling in their metamorphosis, as for example here, where we have come so far, where the building is a concrete structure in its basement and where one has to empathize with the design of what the concrete is. You enter here at the west gate. Here is the room for checking in your coat. The staircase, which leads up on the left and right, takes you up to the wooden structure containing the auditorium, the stage and adjoining rooms. Please follow me up the stairs to the auditorium.

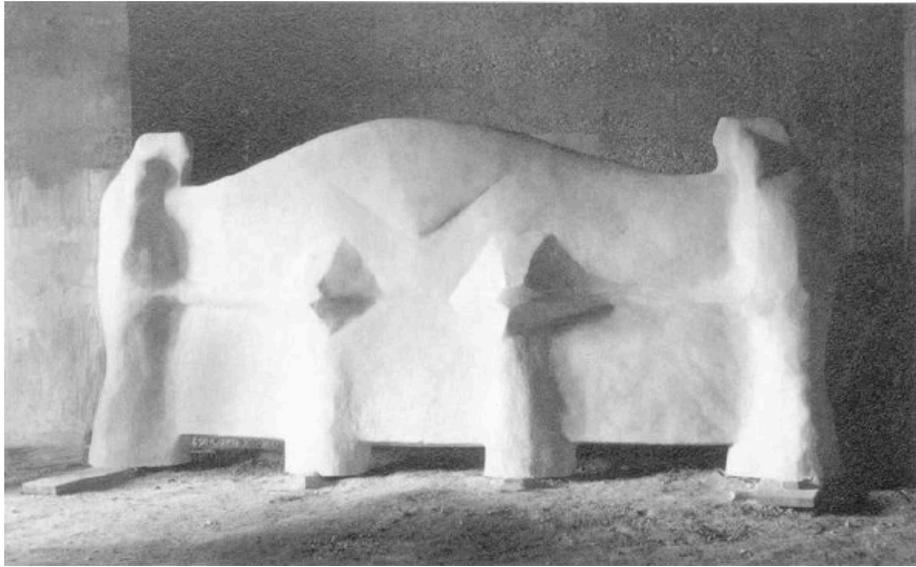


Figure 26

We first enter a kind of vestibule (Fig. 27). You will feel the very different impression that the wooden paneling creates compared to the concrete paneling on the lower floor. I would like to note here: When one has to work with stone, concrete or other hard materials, one has to approach it differently than when one has to work with a soft material, for example, wood. The material of wood makes it necessary to focus one's entire perception on the fact that one has to scrape corners, concaves, and hollows out of the soft material, if I may use the expression. It is scraping, scraping out. You deepen the material, and only by doing so can you enter into this relationship with the material, which is a truly artistic relationship. While when working with wood you can only coax out of the material what gives the forms if you focus your attention on deepening, when working with hard material you do not have to do with the recesses. You can only develop a relationship with the hard material by applying it, by working convexly, by applying raised areas to the base surfaces, for example when working with stone. Grasping this is an essential part of artistic creation, and it has been partially lost in more recent times.

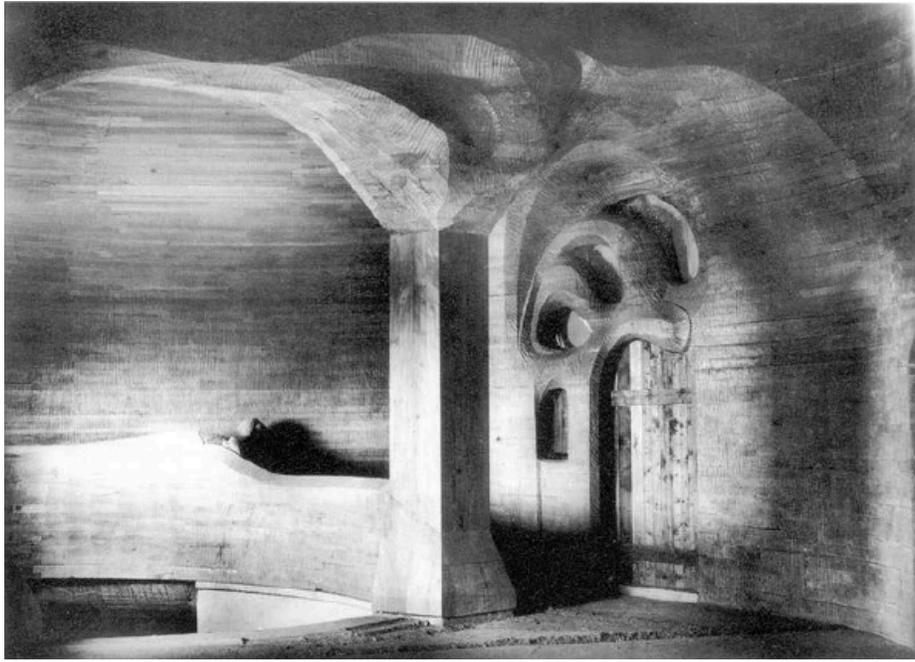


Figure 27

You will see when we enter the auditorium how each individual surface, each chapter, is treated individually. In this organic structure, a chapter can only be such that one feels: In what follows each other, no kind of repetition can be created, as is otherwise the case with symmetrical-geometric-static architectural styles. In this building, based on organic ideas, you have only a single axis of symmetry, which goes from west to east. You will only find a symmetrical arrangement in relation to this, just as you can only find a single axis of symmetry for a higher organism, not out of arbitrariness, but out of the inner organization of forces of the being in question.

At this point, I would also like to mention that the treatment of the walls also had to be completely different under the influence of the organic building idea than it was before. A wall was for earlier architects what demarcates a space. It had the effect of being inside the room. This feeling had to be abandoned in this building. The walls had to be designed in such a way that they were not felt as a boundary, but as something that carries you out into the vastness of the macrocosm; you have to feel as if you are absorbed, as if you are standing inside the vastness of the cosmos. Walls had to be made transparent, so to speak, whereas in the past every effort was made to give the wall such artificial forms that it was closed, opaque. You will see that the transparent is used artistically at all, and that was driven out of elementary backgrounds into the physical in these windows that you see here and that you will see in the building.

If you see windows in the sense of the earlier architectural style, you will actually have to have the healthy sense: they break through the walls, they do not fit into the architectural forms, but they only fit in through the principle of utility. Here, artistic feeling will be needed down to the last detail. It was necessary to present the wall in such a way that it is not something closed, but something that expands outwards, towards infinity. I could only achieve this by remembering that you can scratch out designs from single-colored window panes, as if using an erasing method, a glass etching method. And so, monochromatic window panes were purchased, which were then processed in such a way that the motifs one wanted to have were scratched out with the diamond stylus. So for this purpose, an actual glass etching technique was conceived, and from this the windows emerged.

When you consider the motifs of the windows, you must not think that you are dealing with purely symbolic designs. You can see it already on this larger windowpane (Fig. 109): nothing is designed on these window panes other than what the imagination produces. There are mystics who develop a mysticism with superficial sentences and strange ideas and constantly explain that the physical-sensual outer world is a kind of maja, an illusion. Often people approach you and say that so-and-so is a great mystic because he always declaims that the outer world is a maja. The human physical countenance has something that is maya, that is absolutely false, that is something quite different in truth. What appears on this windowpane is not something that symbolizes; it is an essence that is envisaged, which only does not look to the spiritual observer as it appears to the senses. The larynx is the organ of vision for the etheric; the larynx is already Maja as a physical larynx, and that which is a merely physical-sensual vision is not reality.

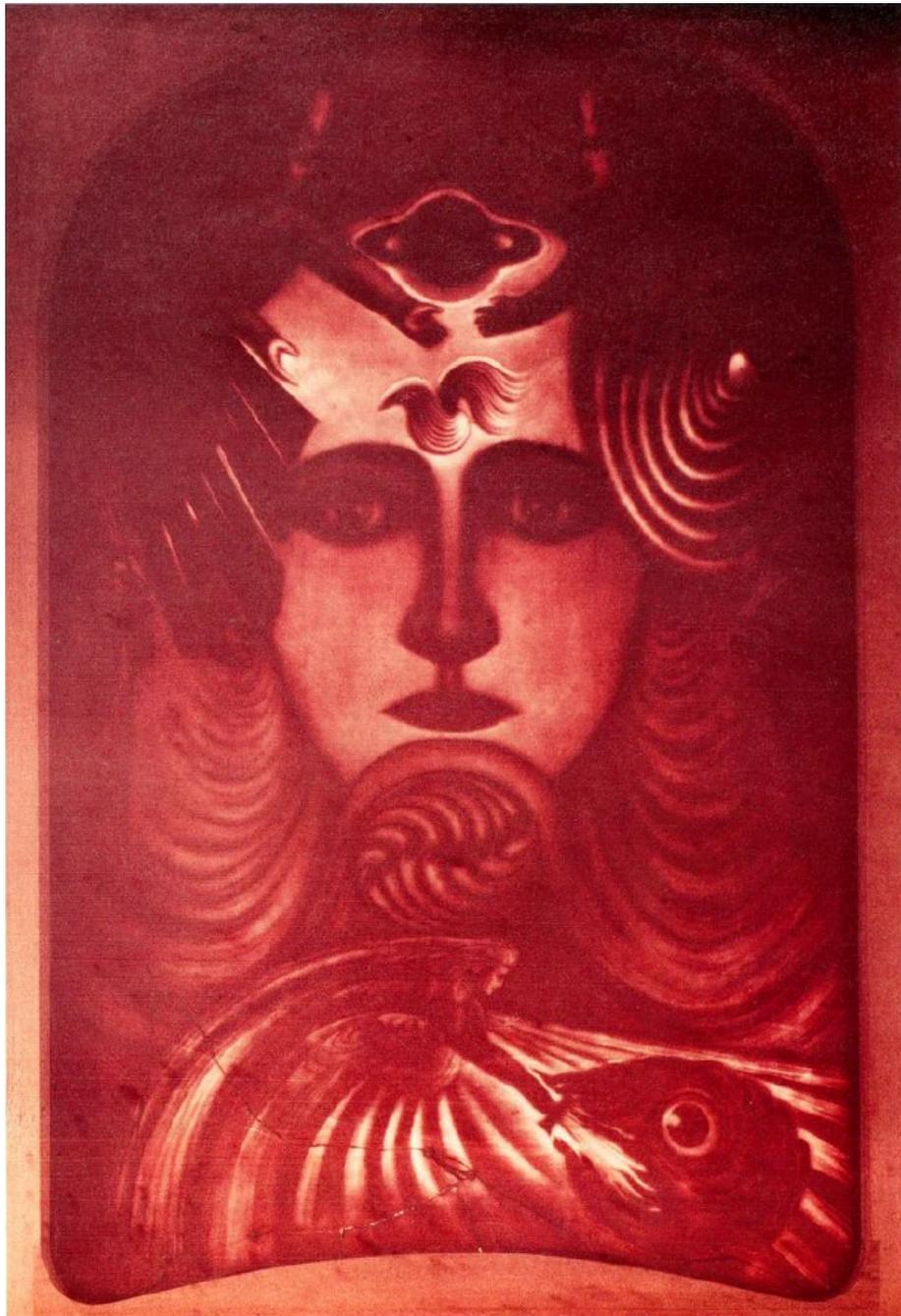


Figure 109

What is the spiritual meaning behind this? The spiritual fact is that the human being is truly being whispered in the ear, left and right, what the secrets of the world are. So that one can say: the bull speaks in the left ear, the lion in the right ear. If one wants to depict something like this as a motif in a picture or in words, one can only put into the word what is already in the picture itself. It must be clearly understood, however, that such a picture can only be understood by someone who lives in the world view from which it originated. A person who does

not have a living Christian feeling will not be able to relate to the pictorial representations that Christian art has produced.

The artist experiences a great deal when he immerses himself in a vision; but such an experience must not be translated into abstract thoughts, otherwise it will immediately begin to fade. One example of the artist's experience is this: when Leonardo da Vinci painted his Last Supper, which has now fallen into such disrepair that it can no longer be appreciated artistically, people thought it took too long. He couldn't finish the Judas because this Judas was supposed to emerge from the darkness. Leonardo worked on this painting for almost twenty years and still hadn't finished it. Then a new prior came to Milan and looked at the work. He wasn't an artist; he said that Leonardo, this servant of the church, had to finally finish his work. Leonardo replied that he could do it now; he had always only sketched the figure of Judas because he had not found the model for it; now that the prior was there, he had found the model for Judas in him, and the picture would now be quickly finished. — There you have such an external, concrete experience. Such external, concrete experiences play a much greater role in all the artist's work than can be expressed in such brief descriptions.

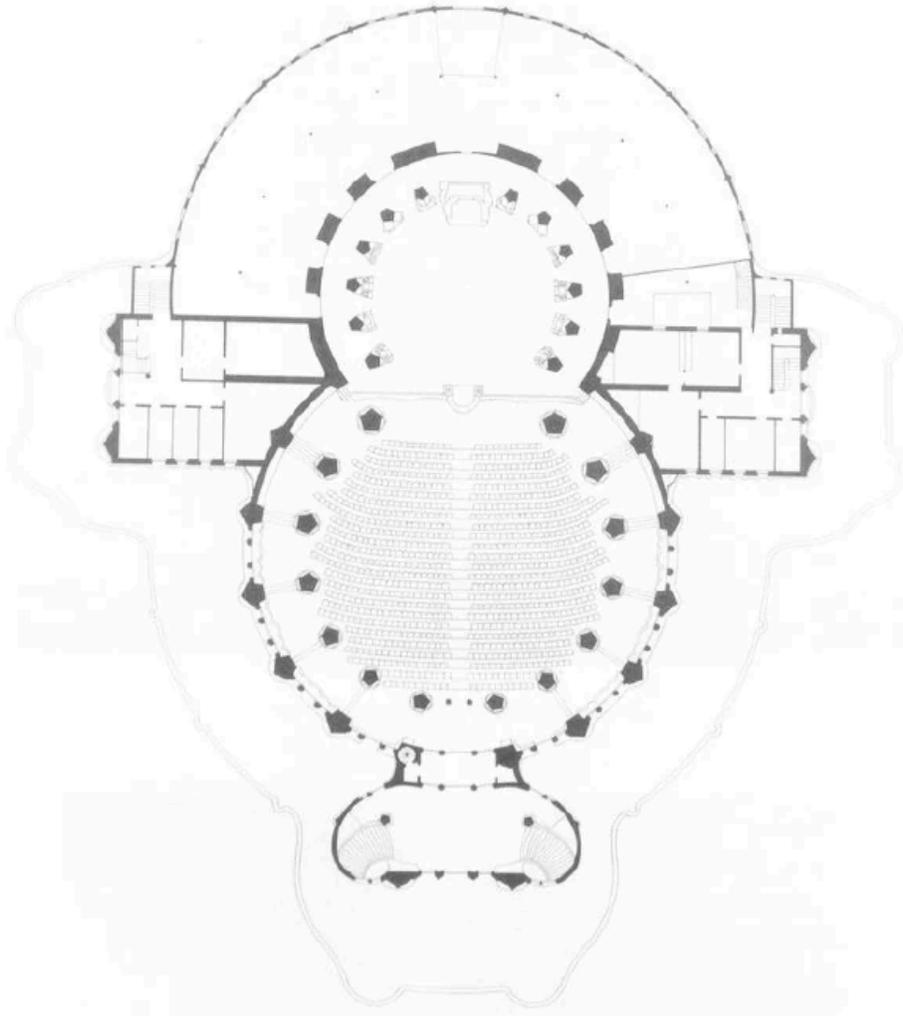


Figure 20

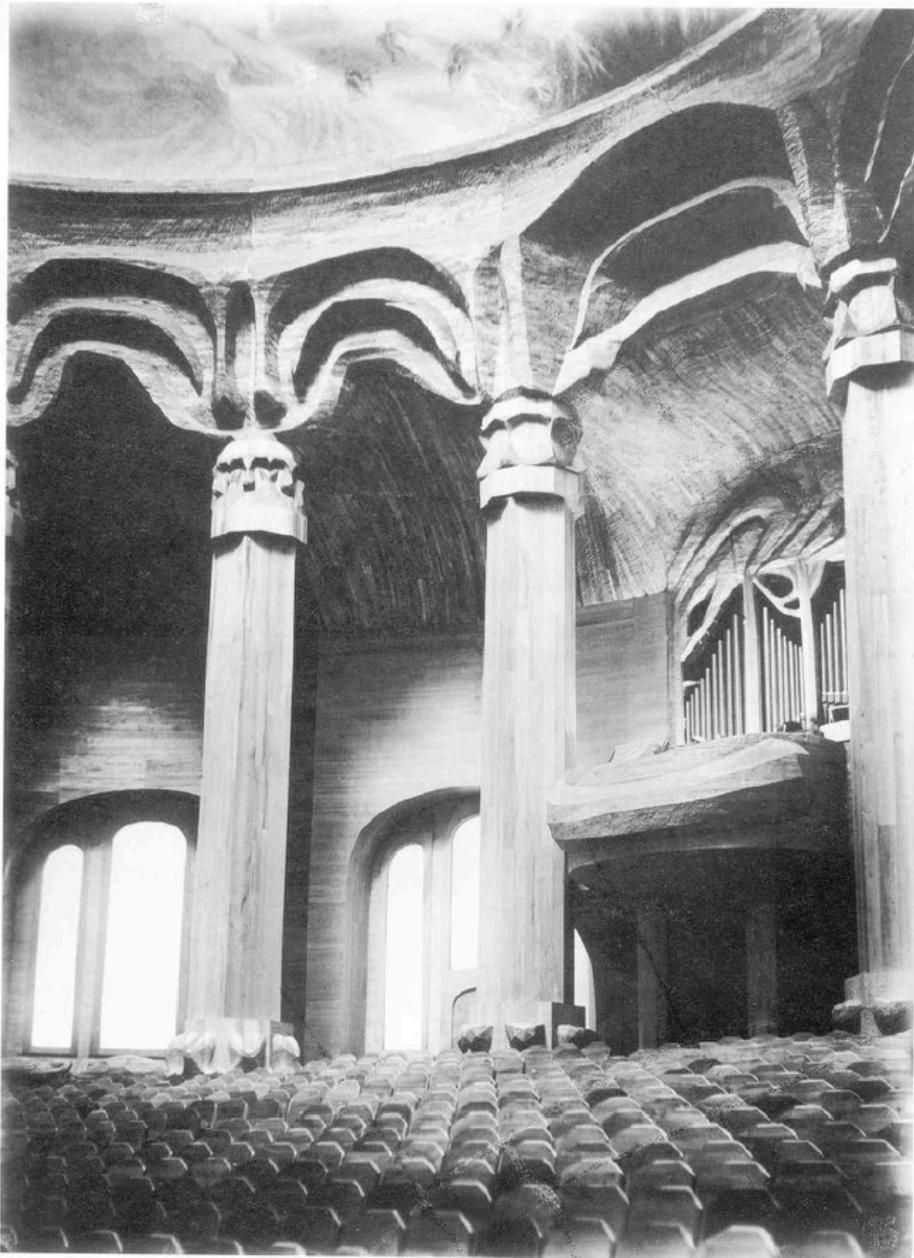


Figure 28

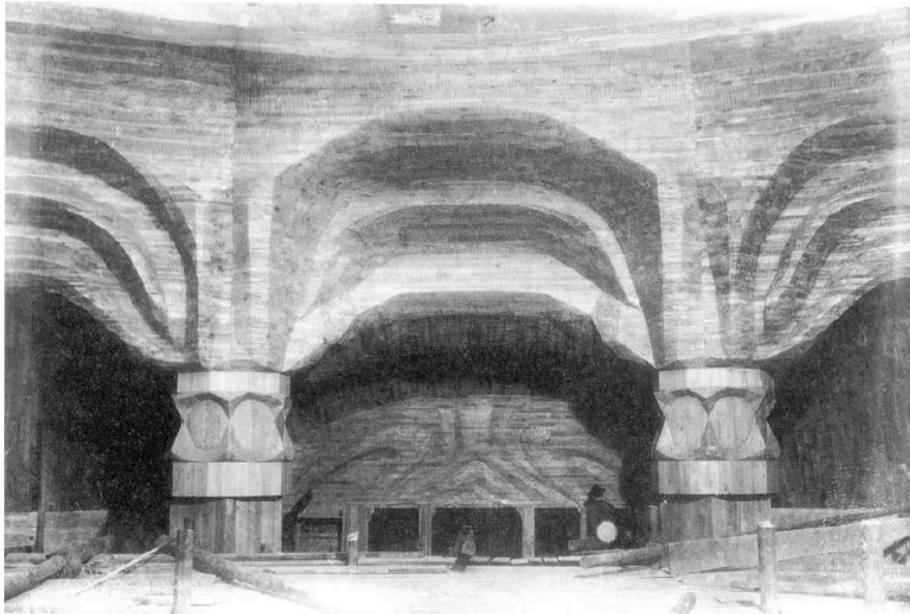


Figure 33

You have [now] entered the building through the room below the organ and the room for musical instruments, dear attendees. If you look around after entering, you will find the building idea initially characterized by the fact that the floor plan (Fig. 20) represents two not quite completed circles that interlock in their segments. It seems to me that the necessity for shaping the building in this way can already be seen when approaching the building from a certain distance and if one has an idea of what is actually supposed to take place in the building. I will now explain further what is connected with the building idea. First of all, I would like to point out that you can see seven columns arranged in symmetry solely against the west-east axis, closing the auditorium on the left and right as you move forward. These seven columns are not formed in such a way that a capital shape, a pedestal shape or an architrave shape above it is repeated, but the capital, pedestal and architrave shapes are in a continuous development. The two columns at the back of the organ room have the simplest capital and pedestal motifs (Figs. 28, 33): forms that, as it were, strive from top to bottom, with others striving towards them from bottom to top. This most primitive form of interaction between above and below is then metamorphosed in the following architrave, capital and pedestal forms (Figs. 35-54).

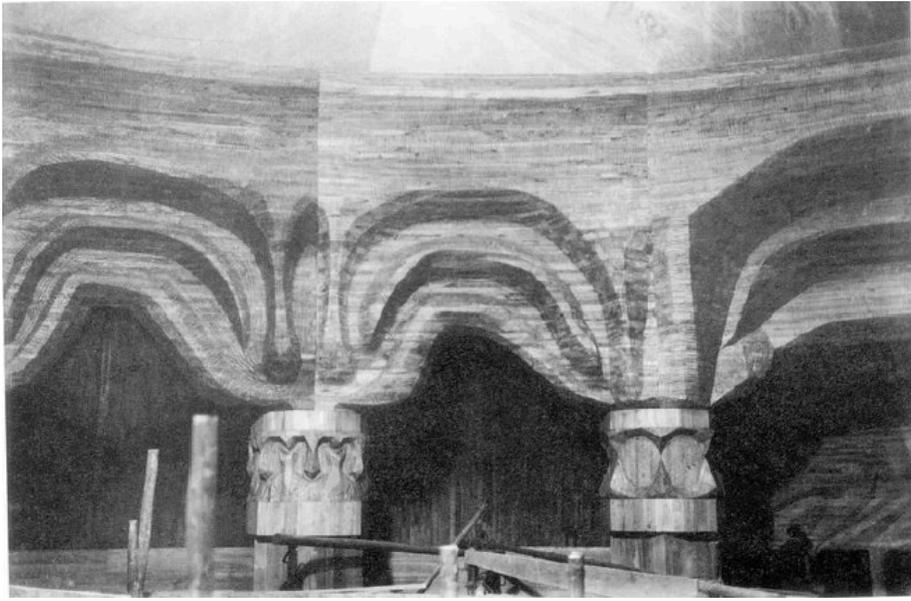


Figure 35

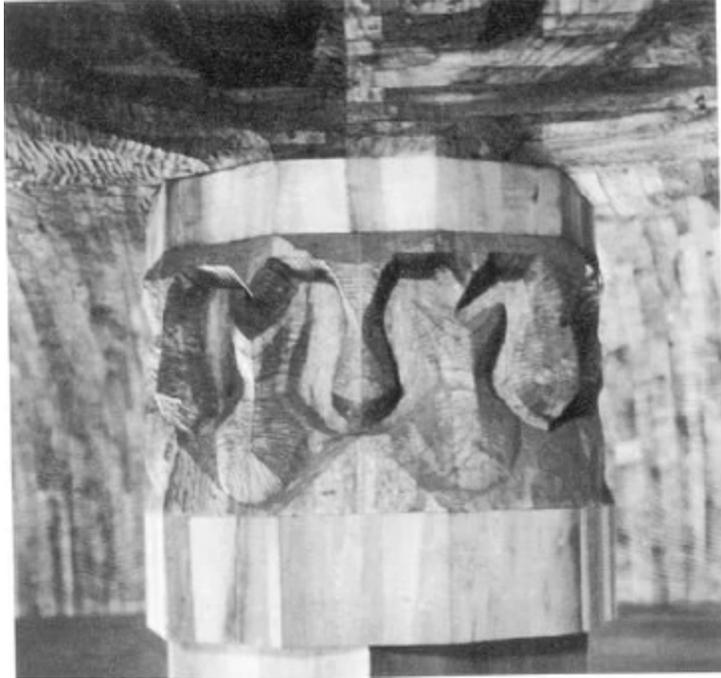


Figure 36

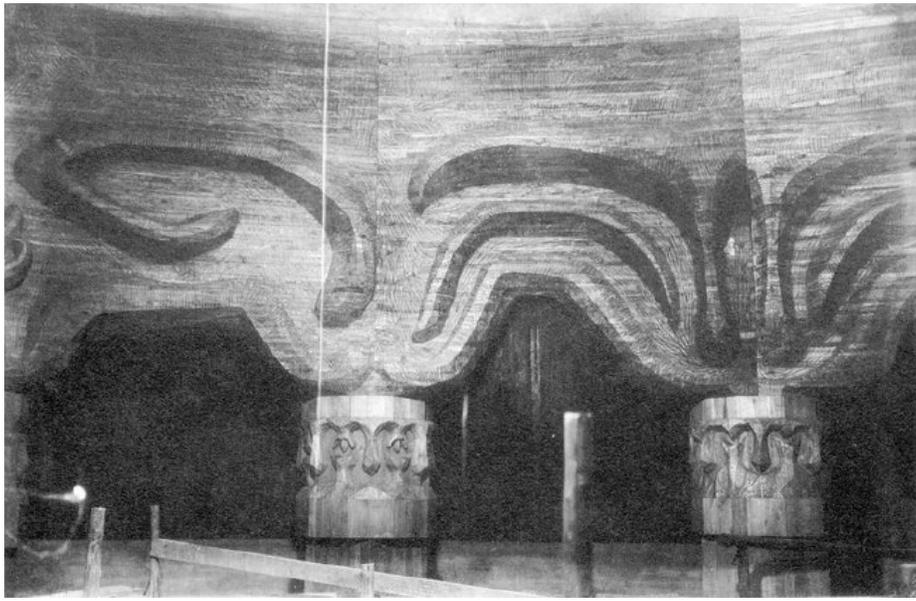


Figure 37



Figure 38

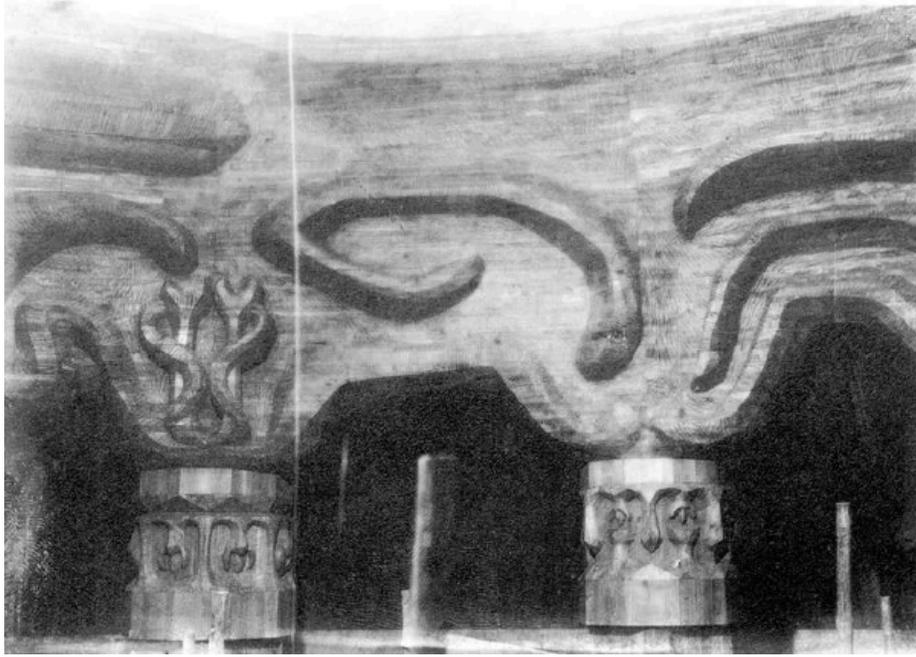


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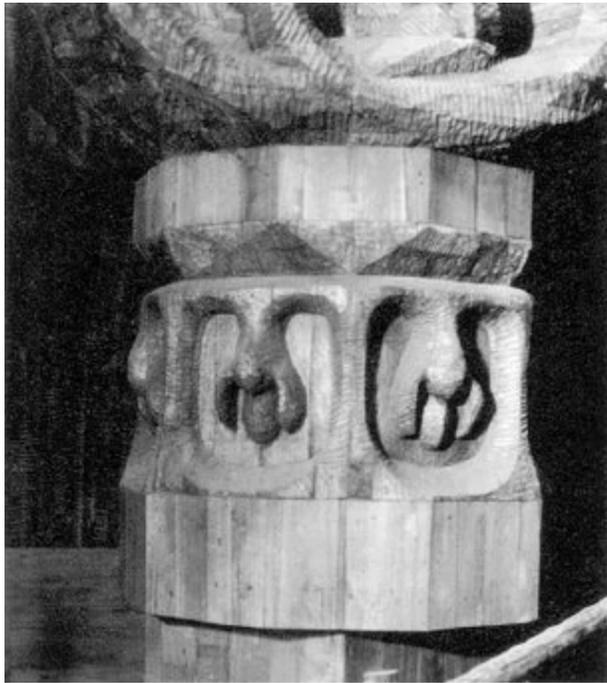


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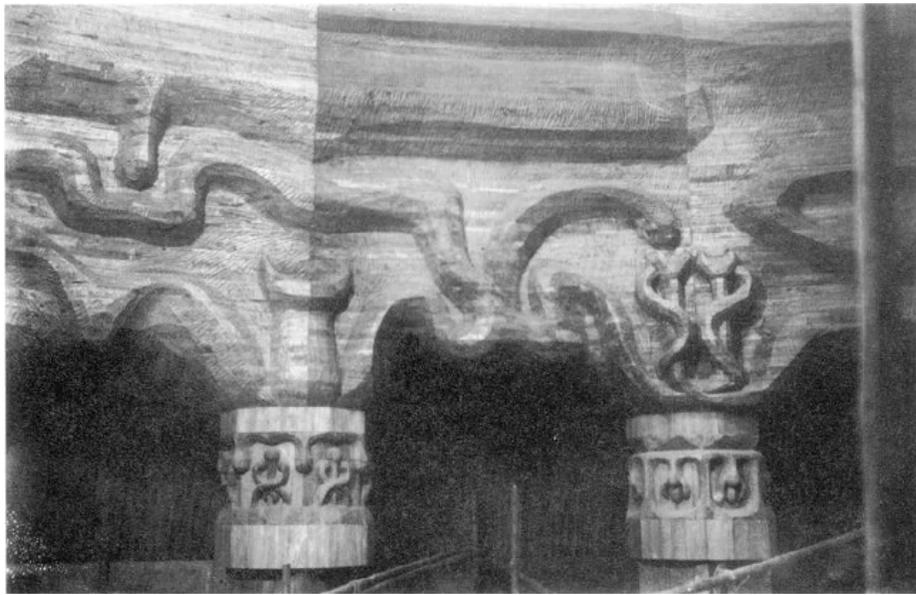


Figure 41



Figure 42

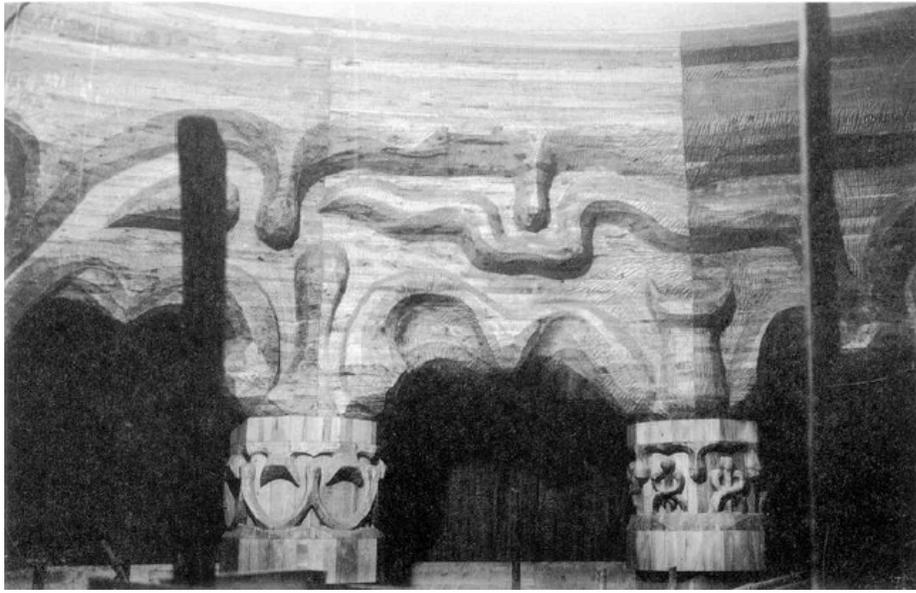


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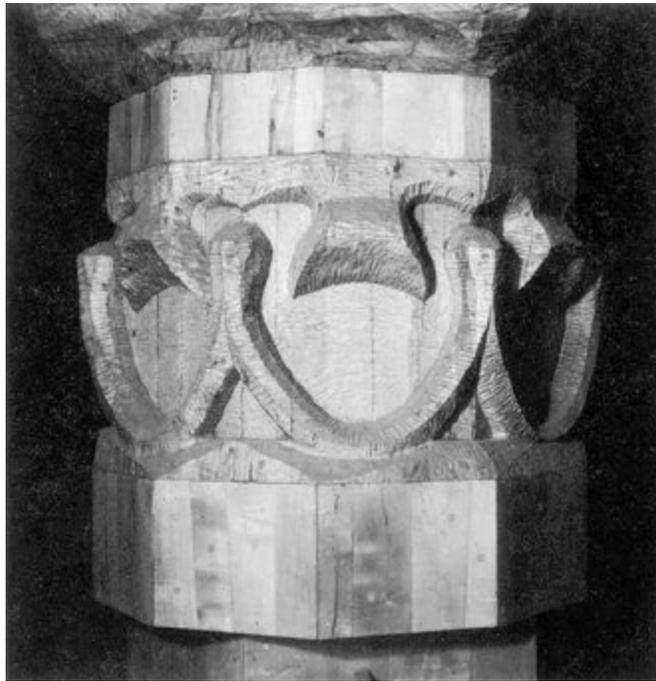


Figure 44

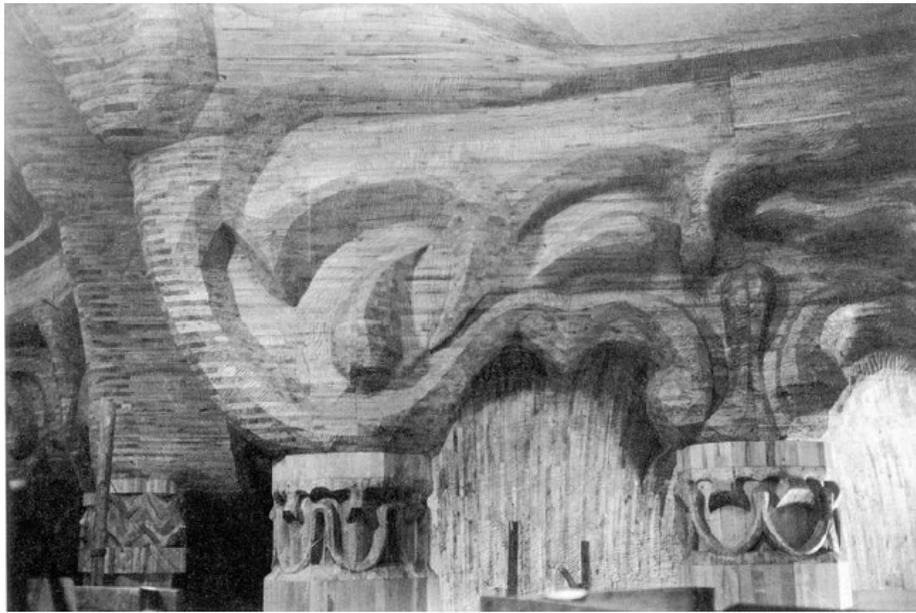


Figure 45



Figure 46



Figure 47

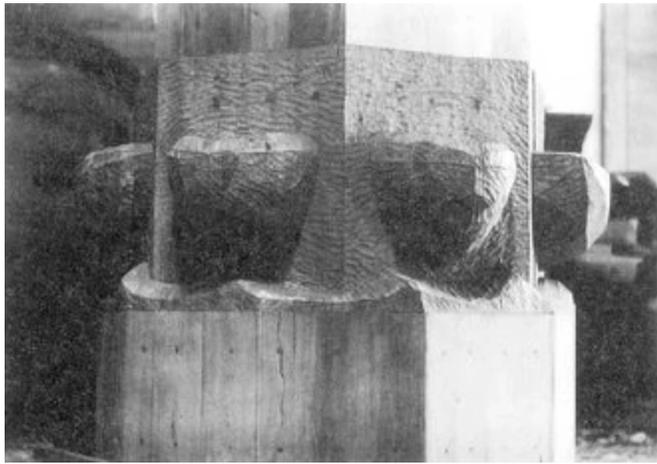


Figure 48

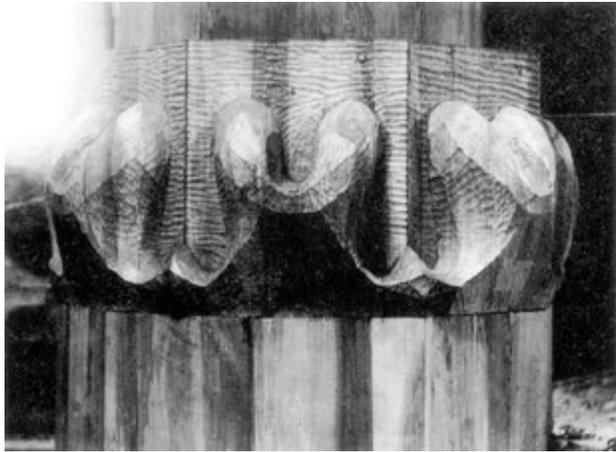


Figure 49

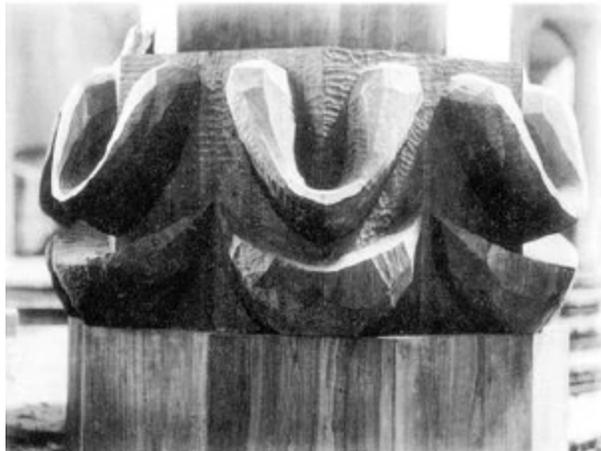


Figure 50

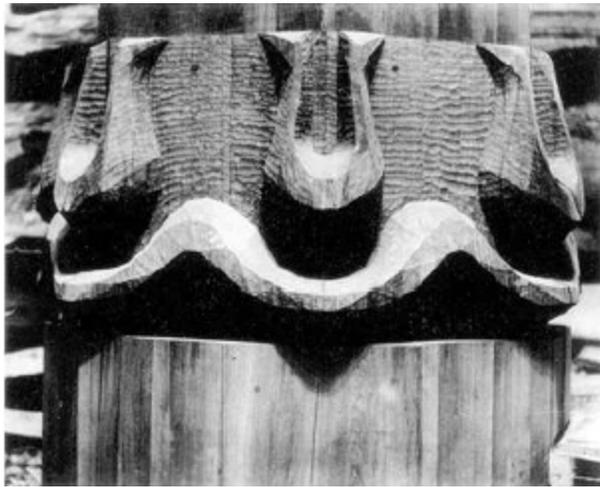


Figure 51

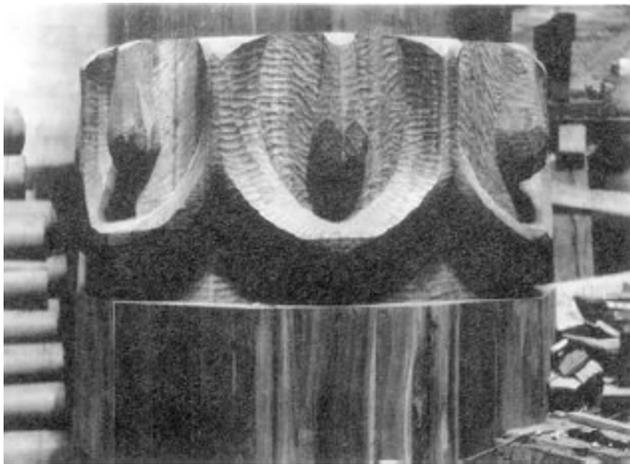


Figure 52

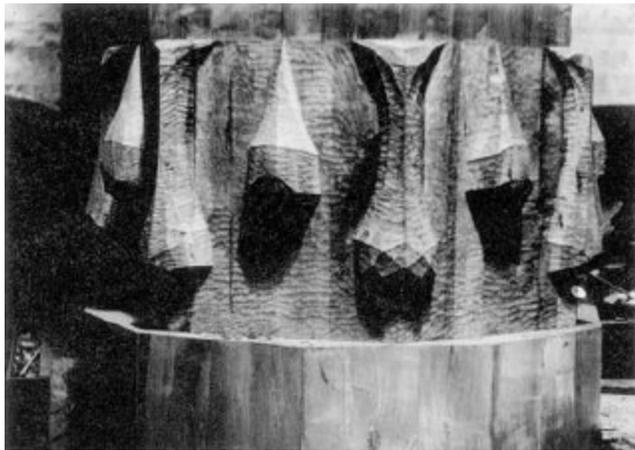


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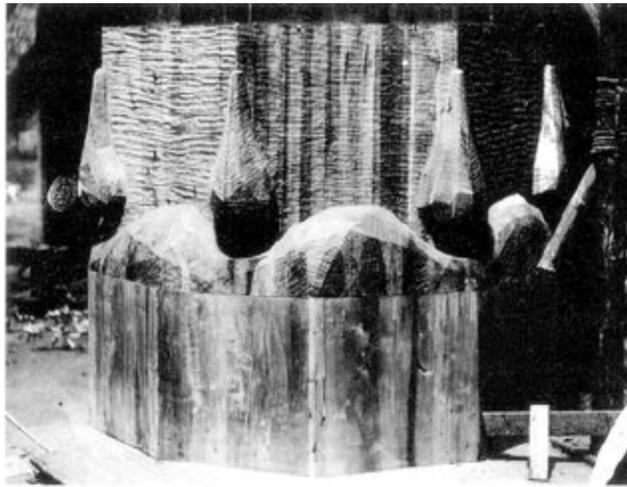


Figure 54

This progressive metamorphosis came about through the fact that, when I was forming the model (Fig. 22), I tried to recreate what occurs in nature by force. What happens in nature, where an unnotched leaf with primitive forms is first formed at the bottom of the plant, and then this primitive form metamorphoses the higher you go, into the indented, more intricately designed leaf, even transformed into a petal, stamen and pistil, which must be imitated - although not in a naturalistic way - one must place oneself inwardly and vitally into it and then create from within, as nature creates and transforms, as it produces and metamorphoses. Then, without reflection, but from much deeper soul forces than from reflection, one gets such transformations of the second from the first, the third from the second, and so on.

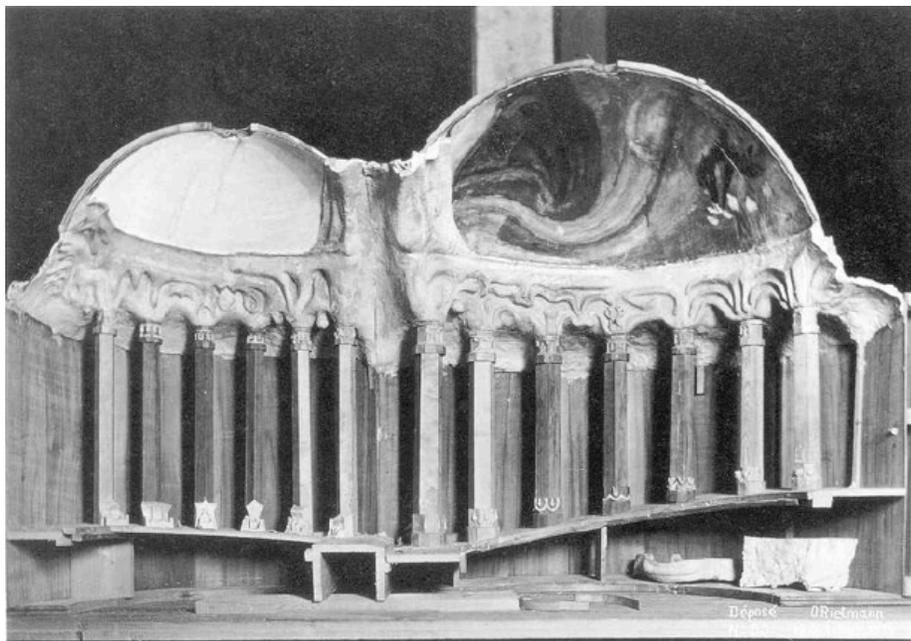


Figure 22

It is possible to misunderstand that, for example, in the fifth column and in the architrave motifs above the fourth column, something like a caduceus appears (Figs. 41, 42). One could now believe that the caduceus was stuck in these two places by the intellect. I believe that someone who had worked from the intellect would probably have placed the caduceus in the architrave motif and, because the intellect has a symmetrical effect, the column motif with the caduceus below it. Someone who works as we have here finds something different. Here, with the motif that you see as the fourth capital motif, this Mercury staff emerged just as a petal emerges from the sepal, only through sensing the metamorphosing transformation, without me even remotely thinking of forming a Mercury staff. I did not think of a past style, but of the transformation of the fourth capital motif from the third. One can see how the forms that have gradually emerged in the development of humanity have developed quite naturally.

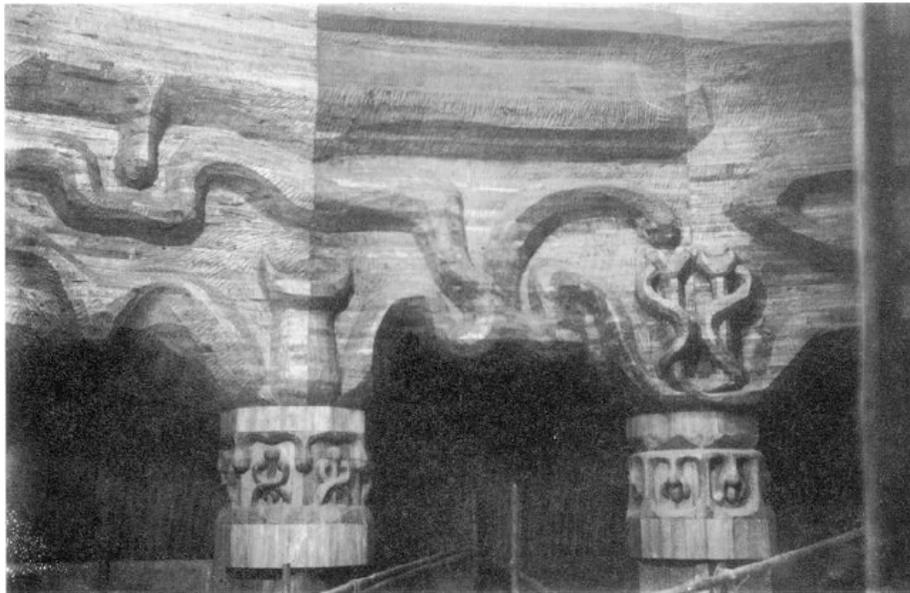


Figure 41



Figure 42

Then we come to the epoch when the human being intervenes in his or her psychological development. If we work this into the column in an individualizing way, what is worked on earlier on the surface of the architrave comes later. That is why you see the caduceus on the capital later than on the architrave. A plant that is thin and delicate develops different leaf shapes than a sturdy one. Compare just a shepherd's purse with a cactus, and you will see how the filling and shaping of space is expressed in the figurative design.

At the same time, a cosmic secret arises in this way of feeling evolution through. There has been much talk of evolution in recent times, but little feeling about it. One only thinks it through with the mind. One speaks of the evolution of the perfect from the imperfect. Herbert Spencer and others have done much harm to this, and the thought has arisen that is completely justified in front of the mind, but which does not do justice to the observation of nature: In intellectual thinking, one assumes that in evolution, the simpler forms are at the beginning and that these then become more and more differentiated and differentiated. Spencer, in particular, worked with such evolutionary ideas. But evolution does not show it that way. There is, however, a differentiation, a complication of the forms; but then one comes to a center, and then the forms simplify again. What follows is not more complicated, but what follows is simpler again. You can see this in nature itself. The human eye, which is the most perfect, has, so to speak, achieved greater simplicity than the eye forms of certain animals, which, for example,

have the xiphoid process, the fan, which has disappeared again as the eye in evolution moved further up to become human.

It is therefore necessary for man to connect with the power of nature, to feel the power of nature, to make the power of nature his own power and to create from this feeling. Thus, an attempt has been made to design this building in an entirely organic way, to design every detail in its place as it must be individualized from the whole. So you can see, for example, that the organ (Figs. 28-30) is surrounded by plastic motifs that make it appear as if the organ is not simply placed in the space, but that it works out of the whole remaining organic design, as if growing out of it. So everything in this building must be tried to be made in this way.

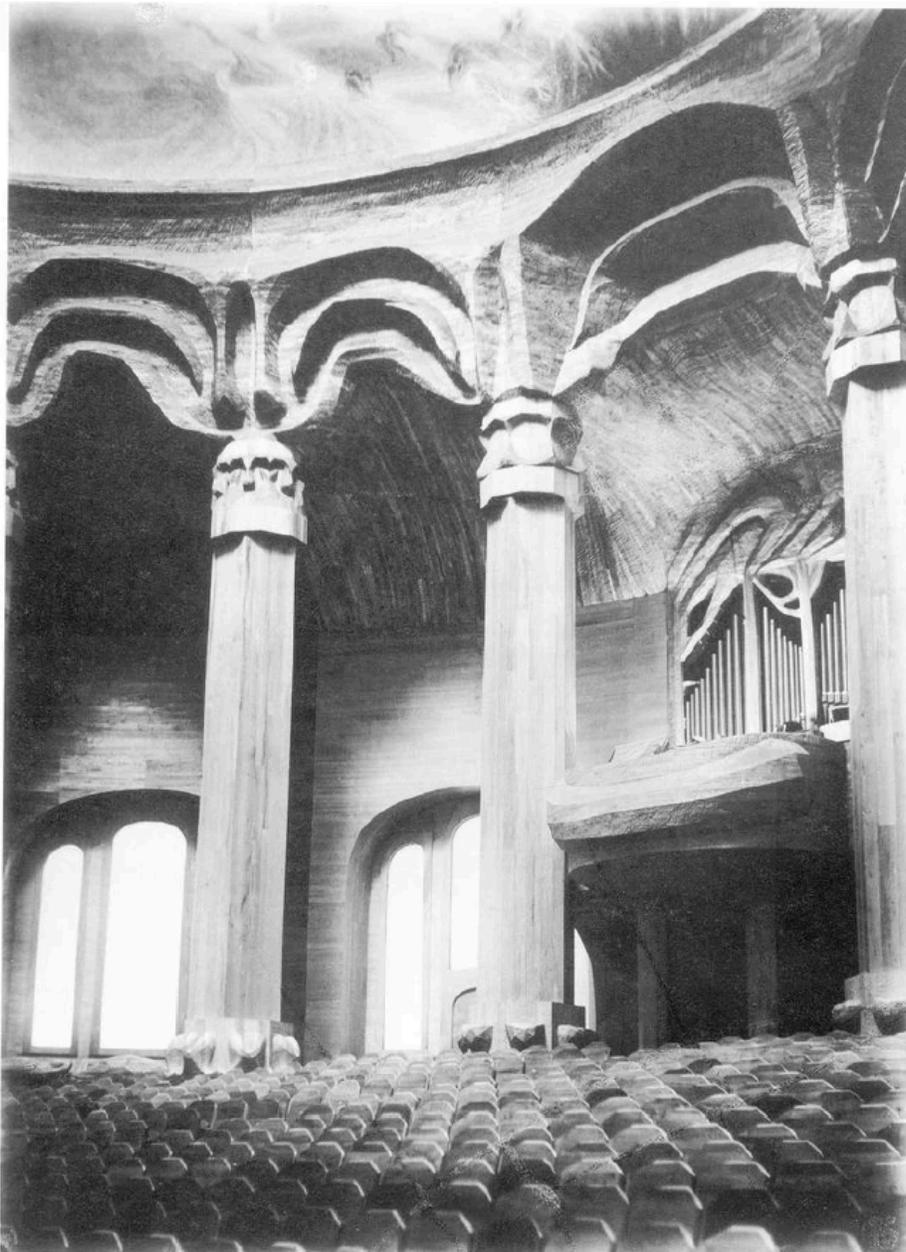


Figure 28

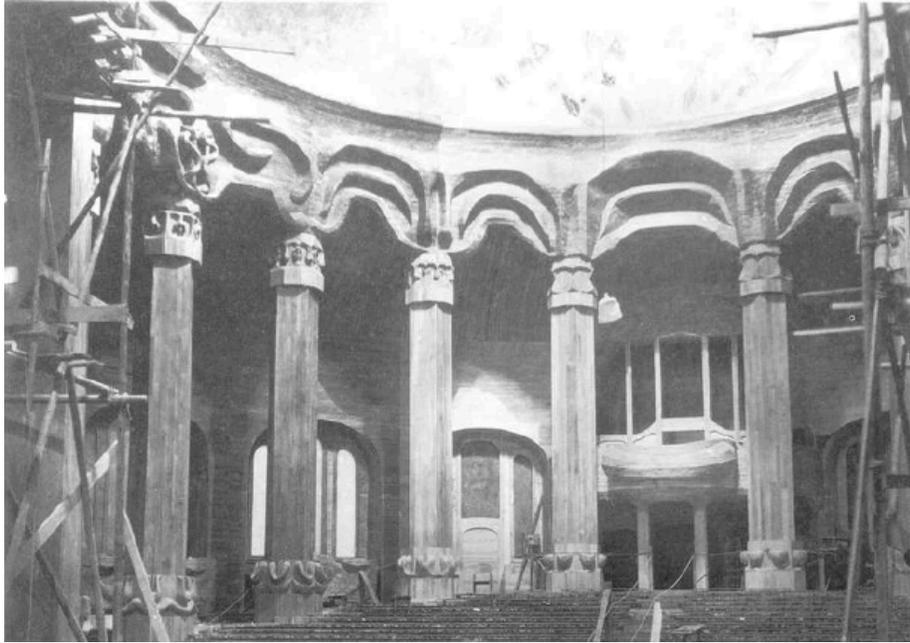


Figure 29



Figure 30

Here you see the lectern (Fig. 68) on which I am standing. Initially, the idea was to create something here that would, as it were, grow out of the other forms of construction, but in such a way that it would also express the fact that from here, through the word, one strives to ex-

press everything that is to be expressed in the building. At the moment when a person speaks here, the forms of what is spoken must continue in such a way that, just as the nose betrays in its form what the whole person is through his or her countenance, so too can the forms of what is spoken continue in such a way that the whole human being is revealed through the form of the nose. Anyone who has made artistically inspired nose studies can create the 'architectural style', the physiognomy of the whole human being, from a nose study. No one can ever have a different nose than they have, and there could never be a different lectern than the one that is here. However, if you claim this, it is meant according to your own view; you can only act according to your own view.



Figure 68

That an attempt has been made here to truly metamorphose the body can be seen from the fact that the motifs here in the glass windows are in part really such motifs that arise as images of the soul's life. For example, look at the pink window here (Fig. 113). You will see on the left wing something coming out like the west portal of the building; on the right wing you see a kind of head. There you see a person sitting on a slope, looking towards the building, and another person looking towards the head. This has nothing to do with speculative mysticism; it has to do with an immediate inner visual experience. This building could not have been created in any other way than by sensing the shape of the human head in a mysterious way, and the organic power on the one hand and the shape of the human head on the other hand result in the intuitive shape of the building. Therefore, the person sitting on the slope sees the metamorphosis of the building in his soul, sometimes as a human head, sometimes as the building revealing itself to the outside world. This provides a motif that leads, if I may say so, to an inner experience.

There you will find in the blue windowpane (Fig. 111) a person who is aiming to shoot a bird in flight. In the right-hand pane you will see that the person has fired. The bird in the left-hand field is in a sphere of light. Around the man you find all kinds of figures vividly alive in the astral body, one when he is about to shoot, the other when he has shot. This is reality, but it is from mundane life. I can imagine that those who always want to be dripping with inner elevation take offence when they experience such things as they are meant here, that a human shooting is simply depicted. Yes, I was pleased when an Italian friend once used a somewhat crude expression about theosophists, who are such mystics. The friend who had already died said it, and I may say it in the very esteemed company here, because the person concerned was a princess, and what a princess says can certainly be said. She glossed such people, who always want to live in a kind of inner elevation, by saying that they are people with a "face up to their stomachs". I also do not repeat her not quite correct German.

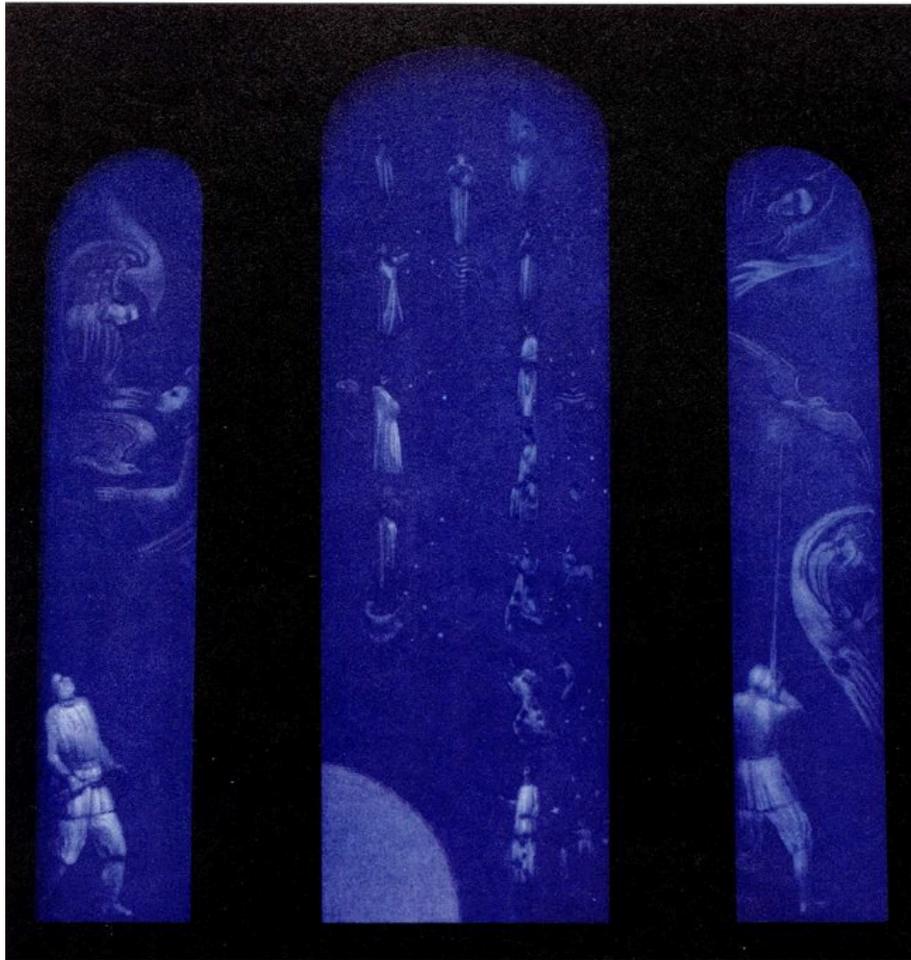


Figure 111

Now, dear attendees, the same idea was then also implemented in painting. I can only talk about the actual painting, about spiritual painting, by referring to the small dome. Only in the small dome was it possible for me to carry out what I have indicated as the challenge of a newer painting: that here, behind the emergence from the color experience, drawing disappears altogether. I had one of my characters in the first mystery drama express this as follows: that the forms appear to be the work of color. For when one feels with the feeling for painting, then one feels the drawing, which is carried into the pictorial, as a lie. When I draw a horizontal line, it is actually a reproduction of something that is not there at all. When I apply the blue sky as a surface and the green below, the form arises from the experience of the color itself. In this way, every pictorial element can be formed. Within the world of color itself lies a creative world, and the one who feels the colors paints what the colors say to each other in creation. He does not need to stick to a naturalistic model; he can create the figures from the colors themselves. It is the case that nature and also human life already have a certain right to shape the moral out of the colored with a necessity.

Yesterday, Mr. Uehli quite rightly pointed out how newer painters already have an intuitive sense of such effects created by light and dark, by the colors themselves, and how they come to paint a double bass next to a tin can. They are pursuing the right thing in and of itself, that it is more important to see how the light gradates in its becoming colored when it falls on a double bass and then continues to fall on a tin can. That is the right thing. But the wrong thing is that this is again based on naturalistic experience. If you really live in the colors, something other than a tin can and a bass violin arises from the colors. The colors are creative, and how they come together is a necessity arising from the mere colors, which you have to experience. Then you don't put a tin can next to a bass violin because that is outside the colors.

So here I have tried to paint entirely from the colors. If you see the reddish-orange spot and the black spot next to the blue spot, it is first of all a vivid impression from the colors. But then the colors come to life, then figures emerge from them, which can even be interpreted afterwards. But just as little as one can make plants here with the human mind, one can just as little paint something on them that one has thought up with the human mind. One must first think when the colors are there, just as the plant must first grow before one can see it.

And so a Faust figure with Death and the Child came into being (Figs. 69-74). The whole head emerged out of the colors, with all the figures in it. Only in the realm of the human soul does something spiritually real take shape of its own accord. For example, you can see above the organ motif how something is painted (Fig. 31) that a person with a philistine attachment to the sensual world would naturally perceive as madness. But you will no longer perceive it as madness when I tell you the following: if you close your eyes, you will, as it were, feel something like two eyes looking at each other, inside the eye. What takes place inwardly can certainly be further developed in a certain way. Then what, when viewed in a primitive way, looks like two eyes glowing out of the darkness and what is seen when it is experienced inwardly, can be projected outwards and experienced in such a way that an entire beyond, an entire world-genesis can be seen in it. Here again an attempt has been made to create out of color what the eye experiences when it looks into the darkness and sees itself. One need not merely read the secrets intellectually, one can see them – suddenly they are there.



Figure 69



Figure 70



Figure 71



Figure 72



Figure 73



Figure 74



Figure 31

In a similar way, attempts were made to bring other motifs into reality, again not from the naturalistic imitation of signs and forms, but entirely from color. The ancient Indians and their inspiration, the seven Rishis, who in turn were inspired by the stars, to paint with an open-topped head (Fig. 32, far right) is, if you do it that way, abstract, actually nonsense; I say that quite openly. But when one experiences what was experienced in the ancient Indian culture in the relationship between the disciple and the guru, the teacher, one feels as if the ancient

Indian did not have a skullcap, but as if it had evaporated and as if he were not the one human being who lives in his skin, but one feels as a sevenfold being, as if his soul power was composed of the seven soul rays of the holy Rishis of ancient Atlantis, enlightening him, and that he then communicated to his world that which he revealed, not from his own spirit but from the spirit of the holy Rishis. The more one works out what is said here, the more one comes closer to what has been painted here. The intuitive perception has first placed itself in ancient India, in ancient Atlantis. That which can be seen there has been painted on the wall here, and only afterwards can one speculate when it is there. This is how the message can relate to artistic creation. This is how everything in this building should actually come about.

You will find this building covered with Nordic slate. The building idea must be felt through to the point of radiating outwards. The slate, or the material used to cover it, must shine in a certain way in the sunlight. It seemed to happen by chance here – but of course there is always an inner necessity underlying it. When I saw the Nordic slate in Norway from the train, I knew that it was the right thing to cover the building with. We were then able to have the slate shipped from Norway in the pre-war period. You will feel the effect when you look at the building from a distance in good sunshine.

My main concern during the construction was the acoustics. The building was of course also provided with scaffolding on the inside during construction so that work could be carried out above. This did not produce any acoustics, the acoustics were quite different, that is, it was a caricature of acoustics. Now it so happens that the acoustics of the building were also conceived from the same building idea. My idea was that I had to expect that the acoustic question for the lecturer could be solved from occult research. You know how difficult it is; you cannot calculate the acoustics. You will see how it has been done, but to a certain degree of perfection in the acoustics.

You may now ask how these seven pillars, which contain the secret of the construction, are related to the acoustics. The two domes within our building are so lightly connected that they form a kind of soundboard, just as the soundboard of a violin plays a role in the richness of the sound. Of course, since the whole, both the columns and the dome, are made of wood, the acoustics will only reach perfection over the years, just as the acoustics of a violin only develop over the years. We must first find a way to have a profound effect on the material in order to be able to feel through the building idea what is now sensed as the acoustics of this building. You will understand that the acoustics must be sensed best from the organ podium. You will also see that when two people talk to each other here in the middle, an echo can be heard coming down from the ceiling. This seems to be an indication from the world essence

that one should only speak from the stage or the lectern within the building and that the building itself does not actually tolerate useless chatter from any point.

Now, dear attendees, I have tried to tell you what can be said in this regard while looking at the building. I will have to supplement what I have spoken today in my presentation of the building idea, which I will give at the final event next Saturday. Then I will say what can still be said. Now we have to clear the hall for the next lecture.

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