SUPREMATISM–AS–ARCHITECTURE: OPENING THE WAY TO K. MALEVICH'S WORK

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Abstract

This dissertation is an investigation into the architectural meaning of Kasimir Malevich's Suprematist works and, more specifically, into the meaning of his Architectons of horizontal and vertical construction. A critical "rewinding" of the diverse and seemingly contradictory Suprematist periods (starting with the artist's chef d'oeuvre, his "Funeral Performance" and moving backwards to the figurative works, the Architectons and then, to the 1913 Black Square, in its beginnings in Futurist Zaum poetry) makes patent the fragmentary nature of those periods and introduces Suprematism-as-Architecture as the ultimate meaning of the Suprematist experience in art. Malevich's extensive written work is the guiding thread we follow in trying to demonstrate how this ultimate meaning echoes, in the context of our Nietzschean world, Martin Heidegger's presentation of the question concerning building. Suprematism-as-Architecture opens up avenues of questioning for modern man's attainment of an architectural meaning, i.e., of a thinking-dwelling.

Résumé

Ce mémoire est une étude du sens architectural des œuvres Suprématistes de Casimir Malevitch et, plus précisément, une étude du sens de ses Architectones de construction horizontale et verticale. Un «retour en arrière» critique des périodes Suprématistes multiples et apparemment contradictoires (allant du chef-d'oeuvre de l'artiste soit, de sa Performance funéraire, en passant par l'œuvre figurative et aux Architectones, jusqu'au Carré noir de 1913 et son début avec la poésie Futuriste Zaum) explique la nature fragmentaire de ces différentes périodes et introduit Le Suprêmatisme en tant qu'architecture comme le Suprématisme dans sa totalité. Les vastes écrits de Malévitch sont le fil conducteur qui a guidé ce mémoire pour démontrer la signification intégrale du Suprématisme parallèle par rapport à l'argument présenté par Martin Heidegger sur la question concernant la construction, en particulier dans le contexte d'un monde de plus en plus Nietzschéen. Le Suprêmatisme en tant qu'architecture ouvre aussi la voie à la question de la relation de l'homme moderne quant à l'acquisition d'un sens architectural, c'est-à-dire, une pensée-habitation.

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Introduction

Western scholars who have set out to study Kasimir Malevich's Suprematist works in the entirety of their many and apparently contradictory periods and who have not, therefore, recoiled at the sight of the complexity and density of those periods tend to agree on the creation by Malevich of obstacles to a sheer historiographical interpretation of his works. They also tend to speak of those works from within the context of the essential experience that constitutes Suprematism.

Relative to those obstacles, mention can be made of his literary style, which borrows its contradictory and sometimes meaningless character from the Futurist Zaum poetry, as well as the alteration of the chronological order of his works and the very existence of the aforementioned periods. The artist can be seen as wandering about places and in his movement he discharges the possibility of a clear logical
structure of development. Thus, the scattered traces of the movement remain as a possibility for order and meaning.

Only with the effort to clarify the meaning of the "supremacy" of the essentiality of Malevich's artistic experience and only by holding to the uncomfortable insecurity of that experience does the "chaos" of Malevich's art introduce itself as an interesting hermeneutical invitation. This invitation provides further access to a meaning the more we dare dismantle the certainty of answers given by historiography and the more the provenance of our concern with Suprematism comes to the fore.

Among the Western scholars who have, to some extent, moved in that hermeneutical direction, the names Emmanuel Martineau, Jean-Claude Marcadé and Troels Andersen should be emphasized. Marcadé and Andersen have the merit for both the translation of Malevich's written works and the promotion, among Western audiences, of a renewed interest in Suprematism.

Together with the Stalinist demand for Social Realism in art, and going beyond it, we can thus sustain that Malevich followed a playful approach to the "supremacy" inherent in his artistic experience, i.e., *l'enfant qui joue dans l'homme*, as he writes in a letter of 1928(1). Malevich played in the way a child plays. He certainly found himself, by means of the Suprematist experience, in the face of danger. Not only a danger but the danger surfaces in Suprematism. We speak here of a twofold event: Nietzschean Nihilism as the mysterious guest of the Will to Power and the Heideggerian Ge-Stell as the Enframing of machine technology. In the truth-play of the work of art this two-fold danger is brought to light in the Black Square of 1913 and subsequently thought through in the many Suprematist periods. In this sense, Suprematism is essentially a "dangerous" art, i.e., authentically nihilistic and abyssal in its baring of foundations.

Dangerous playfulness is the only mode of enduring safety on the edge of the ontological abyss. “The intelligent men for whom the child has unlearned how to play stop being wise, because they make life fall into oblivion”(2) Malevich declares.

This dissertation attempts to establish the architectural meaning of Malevich's Suprematist work. Particularly relevant to this effort are the "models-sculptures" the
artist designates *Architectons*. Even though architects of today nurture an attraction to Suprematism, especially to the period corresponding to what Malevich called *Aerial Suprematism*, and furthermore, translate the dynamic and "abstract" visual appeal of the works corresponding to that period into so-called Deconstructivist architecture, Suprematism in its entirety remains insufficiently studied. This lack stems in part from the deeply ingrained habit of the modern subject, by means of which works of art become mere objects of aesthetic appreciation. In comparison to most "deconstructivist" projects thriving in the market of the construction industry, the full meaning of Suprematism and its fragmentary expression in the *Architectons* is a modern bacterium producing aesthetic indigestion

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2 Ibid., my translation.
In relation to our customary understanding of the architectural, the Architectons seem to present us with a very unattractive countenance of architecture. They give us little that might suggest doors, windows for sunlight and fresh air or a sheltering roof against the inclemency of the weather. No beloved Greek columns or firm Vitruvian foundations can be found; instead, our aesthetic good taste is served nothing more than a white destitution: white cubes and parallelepipeds, a geometrical world outfitted with wings and rudders and delivered, in horizontal-vertical dynamism, to its rootlessness. This geometrical world of Suprematism was born out of a linguistic affair but a strange and unyielding silence brews in its atmosphere.

However, by lingering at the sight of architectural “unattractiveness” and by illuminating the geometrical world of the Architectons with the pervading single thought of Suprematism from the Black Square to the cube-grave in Nemchinovka we seem to retrieve a sense of "being at home" and a different way of listening to the language spoken therein. To what extent and in which ways this retrieval is sought by Malevich's art is the basic question to be addressed by the following pages.

An introductory view of the single line of thought of Suprematism in its concern with the retrieval of a genuine architectural meaning can be obtained by considering some excerpts taken from the 1928 essay entitled "Painting and the Problem of Architecture." According to Malevich's essay, architects remain on the front of naked utilitarianism and are unable to abandon speculative building, as demanded by life's speculators: the widespread cowardice among architects hinders the movement of new architecture as an artistic form, and therefore, the possibility of a renovation of life through that form. Speaking of the emergent modernist architecture, Malevich acknowledges an affinity with the "Suprematist Forming Element" but insists that this "new architecture" of the West still does not allow a special role to be afforded the problem of contemporary architecture as a purely artistic form.
"By this I do not mean to say that the new architecture of the West is Suprematist, but I can say that Western Architecture stands on the road to Suprematist Architectonics" he declares (3). Malevich adds that "Architectonics" are some sort of "formulae" which lead to architectural structures. These formulae gain expression in the "alpha' and "gota" or "iota" of the horizontal and vertical buildings of the Architectons and reveal the features which ought to be in a new architecture.

An architecture under the influence of Constructivism or under the influence of modern European painting, particularly Cubism and Futurism, has not yet attained, in Malevich's perception, "Suprematist Architectonics." It is clear, however, that painting in the twentieth century has arrived at the point of necessity of an "additional forming element" which leads painters and architects to architecture as such and therefore to Suprematist architecture.

Suprematism in its broadest sense, a Suprematist architecture or Suprematism-as-Architecture, are only variations in the designation of the single thought in Malevich’s art: the Suprematist Square. What is the square? Why does its advent lead modern art into an essential questioning of architecture?

The single thought of Suprematism seems to belong together with the unavoidable thought left to the historicity of twentieth century man: the thought of the being who has already accomplished an absolute domination over the earth; the thought of the being dwelling in the metallic chambers of the metropolis, in the absence of the gods and under the dangerously irresistible spell of machine technology.

The interpretive effort of this dissertation has followed Malevich's winding course and has tried not to avoid the difficult turns along the artist's way. Malevich's way is such that only this kind of determination seems to grant more clarity to the full meaning of the single thought of Suprematism. In our search for the wealth of possibilities opened by Suprematism we can always find ourselves unwinding the balle de laine: the end leads us to beginnings(4).

(4) Due to the frequent references to Malevich's written works (our primary source), we think it appropriate, for the sake of brevity, to designate the bibliography in the following manner:


Chapter 1. Suprematism-as-Architecture and Malevich's Funeral-Performance

1.1. The Fields of Nemchinovka as the Larger Backdrop of the Funeral-Performance

Malevich died on the 15th of May, 1935 in Leningrad and left instructions on his will that he should be buried in a coffin he had himself designed on Suprematist lines. ... His ashes were buried at Nemchinovka near Moscow (1).

There is truth in biographical information. Along with this truth, there exists a working out of fundamental questions, which are intrinsic to the artistic experience of Suprematism. These questions, however, hardly come to surface in so far as the precision of historiographical concerns weigh them down continually. Nemchinovka is the closing act of a performance outlined by Malevich and carried out by Nikolai Suetin, one of the artist's most enduring followers. In spite of a rupture in their relationship in the early 1930s, Suetin reconciled himself with his teacher, due in part to the proximity of Malevich's death, and carefully observed the artist's will concerning not only Nemchinovka and the cube-grave, but also in relation to the preceding acts making up the Suprematist Funeral-Performance.

The village near Moscow and the fields around it are the backdrop against which the cube-grave is placed. This specific rendering is particularly relevant to the full meaning of Suprematism as established by the Funeral-Performance. The burial site is arranged in such a way that both the Cube and the Suprematist Square, as foundational elements of Suprematism, find themselves integrated into both the fields around the village and the phenomenon Malevich persistently addressed in relation to them. This is the phenomenon of modern man’s transition from the peasant way of cultivating the land to the highly mechanized agro-industry. A grave placed against the backdrop of the dawning of modern technology.
Peasantry and cultivation of the fields are themes which precede Malevich's arrival at Suprematism and which recur throughout his artistic life. Nevertheless, early and late treatments of the themes are as distinct in their basic characterization as the distinctness of the peasant and modern relationship to the cultivated fields.

The early works on the peasant theme (as well as some late works dated back to the 1910s), which precede Suprematism, indulge in the peasant's maintenance of the soil, in their employment of tools and in the sheltering presence of the godly in their daily toiling (cf. Illustrations 1-3). The Suprematist works concerning the same theme, on the contrary, speak of a transformed world. The introduction of Suprematism brings about a new vision of the former peasant world. Most of the works depict bewildered and mysterious peasants in a radically new environment: darkened faces, limblessness, agitated skies, and fields as Suprematist coloured stripes are some of the features associated with the new relation to the earth (cf. Illustrations 4-6).

The transition from a peasant maintainance of the fields to our agro-industry, a phenomenon intrinsic to the advent of modern machine technology, is addressed by Martin Heidegger in the following terms:
The earth now reveals itself as a coal mining district, the soil as a mineral deposit. The field that the peasants formerly cultivated and set in order still meant to take care of and maintain. The work of the peasant does not challenge the soil of the field. In sowing grain it places seed in the keeping of the forces of growth and watches over its increase. But meanwhile even the cultivation of the field has come under the grip of another kind of setting-in-order, which sets upon nature. It sets upon it in the sense of challenging it. Agriculture is now the mechanized food industry. Air is now set upon to yield nitrogen, the earth to yield ore, ore to yield uranium, for example (2).

The Cube-Grave and the Suprematist Square, therefore, stand against the backdrop of the uprooted and bewildered peasantry. The loss of the peasant world cannot spare any fields and thus Nemchinovka lays the Cube and the Square- the cornerstones of the architectural meaning of Suprematism- in "unreliable grounds." However, as Malevich explains in some unpublished notes, preserved in the Stedelijk Museum in Amsterdam, the world is still building itself, even out of sheer groundlessness. He observes:

The world constructed itself beyond laws. It does not possess the subsoil on which the engineer could place the first stone ... It has no point of support, no crisscross of rafters which would epitomize the completed mission: a world beyond mission ...

But we are not dejected and we work proudly with the keys of science in order to discover the world.

We sharpen our axe and our mind in order to cut through the opening, but the axe refuses to cut just as the key does: there is no strongman for the former and no keyhole for the latter.

In spite of this we are still certain that science has forced a breach, has made cracks. Go take a look at the world. He who does not go sees otherwise. Hence, for each and every one the world is something novel, a new theatrical spectacle.

This actor of the world hides himself as if afraid of showing his face. He fears that man might tear the many-sided mask from his face and might not recognize his real visage.

So, this actor has a single aim: the rays of absorption, a black ray. His authenticity is extinguished. The prism retains only a black streak like a small crevice through which we can see only gloom inaccessible to any light, sun or the light of knowledge. In this blackness our spectacle ends: thither has gone the world actor hiding his many faces for he has no real visage(3).
The larger backdrop of the full meaning of Suprematism is constituted by the uncomfortable juxtaposition of the Cube-Grave and the Suprematist Square—heralds of the condition of modern art — with the ancient peasant world gradually vanishing from the fields of Nemchinovka. According to Malevich, the metallic culture of the metropolis, its restless movement, geometry and tautness is the environment inciting in art the "additional elements" of Cubism, Futurism and Suprematism. These elements are apparently subdued with the artist's removal to the remote environment of the provinces; the argument is then raised by the general public and the learned critics that art can be “cured” of the diseases of Cubism, Futurism and Suprematism. According to those city dwellers:
... one has only to remove the artist from the center of energy of the city, so that he no longer sees machines, motors, and power lines and can devote himself to the agreeable sight of hills, meadows, cows, farmers and geese, in order to heal his Cubist or Futurist illness. When a Cubist or Futurist, after a long sojourn in the provinces, returns with a lot of charming landscapes, he is greeted joyfully by friends and critics as one who has found his way back to wholesome art (4).

Malevich, however, insists that new humanized nature and the arrival of the world of machine technology cannot be simply incensed at with the art of the provinces for not only the energetic centre of the city but also life itself is already Cubist, Futurist and Suprematist. The "morbid" condition of modern art is, therefore, sustainable only to the extent that the city and the entirety of life show themselves as unwholesome. The destitution we may sense in the metallization of the world of technology does not afford any room for a simplistic revivalism of the peasant world and its sheltering familiarity. The destitution of the technological world can only become the "supreme" question of modern man.

Suprematism as well as Cubism and Futurism are, therefore, clearly associated with the subjection of the many "fields" to the advent of technology. This association has indeed led Malevich to refer to Suprematism as "aeronautical" between 1915 and 1917. Malevich's concern with the relationship of technology to the Suprematist experience cannot, however, be restricted to a mere denial of the provinces in favour of the metropolis or vice versa. The Suprematist experience of the Square led him, as a matter of fact, to reevaluate "Aerial Suprematism" as a "fallacy" to the extent that it restricted itself to simply portraying, by means of a visually abstract language, the sensation of flight. Starting in 1917, with a series of pictures which included Fading Yellow Parallelogram (1917-18) and White Square on a White Background (1917-18), "Aerial Suprematism" and Malevich's meditations on art's relation to technology are amplified in the

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subsequent Suprematist periods leading to the Nemchinovka backdrop. The Suprematist experience tells us that modern man travels in and conquers space, yet he is homeless in having unchained himself from the earth and thus the backdrop of his life-theatre becomes destitution. The same Suprematist Square which launched modern mankind into the heights of space arrests this unlimited outward expansion and drags humans down to the dark depths of the earth. Mankind cannot escape the primordial quadrangular earth and in his Icarian fall is faced with the necessity of building a new architecture, a new dwelling mode, out of a cube-grave, amidst the uttermost loss of the world of sheltering and cultivation. Nemchinovka is the backdrop of a building in destitute times:

... the time remains destitute not only because God is dead but because mortals are hardly aware and capable of their own mortality. Mortals have not yet come into ownership of their nature. Death withdraws into the enigmatic. The mystery of pain remains veiled. Love has not been learned. But the mortals are. They are in that there is language(5).


(5) Heidegger, M. "What Are Poets For?," in Poetry, Language, Thought. New York: Harper and Row, 1971, p. 96. Malevich's amplified understanding of "Aerial Suprematism," as described also in our Section 3.3 in relation to his 'Suprematist Planits,' brings to the fore the same dwelling condition which is enticingly manifested and addressed in Pérez-Gomez's Polyphilo or the Dark Forest Revisited. The MIT Press, 1992 (cf. particularly hour twenty, pp. 249-258). If Malevich's presentation of that dwelling condition moves towards the summit constituted by the question of death,
Pérez-Gomez seems to unveil the former condition in accordance with the panorama of another summit or "supreme question." The latter necessarily reaches the same heights. *Polyphilo’s* summit is the place where Dionysus still lingers: eroticism.

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I.2 Acts of the Suprematist Funeral-Performance

Nikolai Suetin is most probably responsible for the majority of the many existing photographs depicting Malevich's performance. These photographs clearly speak of Malevich's great care in conveying the relevance of his death to the Suprematist experience of the Square. Starting in the 1920s death surfaces in an explicit way as a constant question in the works of the artist. The acts of the performance, as registered in the photographs, should be seen as the climax of the basically anxious state of mind inherent in Suprematism, i.e., the state of mind of the transformation of the artist's self into the "zero of form," as he declares in a 1915 publication, which first appeared in connection with the 0.10 Last Futurist Exhibition (the first public presentation of the 1913 Black Square). Each one of the acts is itself a work of art, authentically concluding the Suprematist anticipatory openness to the "nothing," i.e., to "the possible impossibility of ... [Dasein-'s] ex-istence" (6)

Three photographs depict the Cube-Grave against the backdrop of the fields of Nemchinovka (cf. Illustrations 7-9). The Cube, approximately 80 cm in height, is painted white and marked with the Suprematist Square. Most of the available bibliographies claim that this square is painted black; it has been nevertheless stated that the square is painted red, a reasonable argument in view of Malevich's theory of colour movement. According to this theory, colour is increasingly scattered into black and then white tones, as we gradually leave behind the environment of the village and arrive at the "metallic culture" of the metropolis(7). In any case, it is not possible to ascertain the original colour due to the destruction of the cube-grave during World War II. What really concerns us here, however, is the close association of the Square as the "foundational"element of the Suprematist experience with the Cube-Grave as the basic element whose "disintegration" and "elongation" (in Malevich's terms) allow Suprematism to leave the plane surface and enter the space of architecture.

Natalya Andreevna, Malevich’s third wife and his daughter Una, both important subjects of the artist’s late figurative works (cf. Illustrations 10 and 11), are made clearly present in the surroundings of the cube-grave, as Illustrations 8 and 9 show us. They are also included by Malevich in earlier photographs taken during the days preceding his death (cf. Illustrations 12 and 13). This integration of the subjects should be seen as playing the same role as the broader introduction of the late figurative works in the full meaning of Suprematism. This role is discussed in greater detail in Chapter 2 of this dissertation.

Prior to the setting of the cube-grave against the Nemchinovka backdrop, a large crowd accompanies the Suprematist coffin along the Nevski Prospekt and towards the Moscow Station in Leningrad. The Black Square was attached to the hood of the hearse, warming itself up in the heat of the motor (cf. Illustration 14). It is also claimed that the railroad car carrying the coffin from Leningrad to Nemchinovka bore Suprematist compositions. No photographs, however, are known to have been taken.

The suprematist coffin is particularly relevant to the full meaning of Suprematism. The formal similarity to the vertical Architectons is striking: it is built by means of the same process of "disintegration" and "elongation" of the cube as the basic spatial element in Suprematism. The same metropolitan whiteness predominates; a streak of black stretches along the sides and two additional elements come clearly into view: the Black Square and the first suprematist form to develop out of the square, the Black Circle. Malevich relates the square and the circle as contrasting Suprematist elements, not unlike the horizontal-vertical opposition of the Architectons (cf. Illustration 15-18).
Concerning the contrasting relationship of the Square and the Circle, a parallel is encountered in the Heideggerian notions of "earth" and "world," in his interpretation of the origin of the work of art. Heidegger relates "earth" to the ground "on which and in which man bases his dwelling" (8). "Earth" is never merely our astronomical perception of a planet or a lump of matter. "Earth is that whence the arising [the Greek physis] brings back and shelters everything that arises as such. In the things that arise, earth occurs essentially as the sheltering agent" (9).

The "world," in Heidegger's understanding, "worlds," i.e., it gathers in one the fourfold of earth, sky, divinities and mortals. He explains that the worlding of the world directly concerns the making, taking up and abandoning of the decisions of our history which touch our essential being. These decisions go often times unrecognized by us and are at other times rediscovered by new inquiry. Heidegger stresses that stones, plants or animals have no world. They, nevertheless, belong together and are linked in the hidden sphere of a surrounding totality which grants the world its worlding. In the philosopher's words:

World is never an object that stands before us and can be seen. World is the ever-nonobjective to which we are subject as long as the paths of birth and death, blessing and curse keep us transported into Being" (10).

The suprematist coffin needs to be stressed as constituting the unique instance of an Architecton simultaneously horizontal and vertical, and furthermore, as the only instance of an open and inhabited Architecton. As opposed to the previous Architectons, which remain obstinately closed and refuse to comply with a clearer possibility of function or inhabitability, the Suprematist coffin introduces those works as the possibility of a receptacle for mortal men. The single possibility of a shared function, as a receptacle, is simultaneously the uttermost and ownmost non-relational possibility of death (cf. Illustrations 19—22).

Prior to the procession along Nevski Prospekt, Malevich's body lies in state in the House of the Leningrad Artist's Union (cf. Illustration 19). This act of the performance develops in the following manner: the open Coffin-Architecton is
placed in the centre of the room; the horizontality of the artist's dead body and the lower half of the Suprematist coffin sharply contrast with the verticality of the upper half (on the left-hand side of the photograph) and of the vertical Architecton, Lukos (of around 1928), also designated "Suprematist Column"(11); four artists and friends, including Nikolai Suetin, stand in the vertices of the area occupied by the Coffin-Architecton. Towards the right-hand side some paintings can be seen. Only the 1934 portrait of Una, the artist's daughter, is identifiable (cf. Illustration 11). Finally, a large black square dominates and unifies the entire ensemble. A plaster mould is said to have been made out of Malevich's face and hands.


(9) Ibid.


(11) As opposed to earlier presentations of the Lukos Architecton, as in the context of Illustration 139, it has now been completed by the top and bottom additions of a cube.
The photographs are a rich and dense text. It is very clear that the Black Square holds sway; it has "supremacy" and binds together the fragmentary meaning of the text's sentences. This binding was carried out in such a way that the removal or misinterpretation of any of the sentences, particularly of those we may not yet clearly understand, deplete the text's potential. Among the various scenes of the acts of the performance, the inclusion of the late figurative works, in their sharp "antagonism" to the "abstract" nature of the square, is frequently read as an obscure and "ob-scene" sentence.
Why did the artist not will the exclusion of the figurative works from the full meaning of Suprematism–as–Architecture? The "stain" of the Stalinist repression, the most accepted definition of the later works, could not have been a strong enough reason on the occasion of the performance. Not only did Malevich carefully predetermine the details of the performance, but it is also known that his *Obsèques represented the last public protest against the Stalinist rejection of the "bourgeois-formalist" art of the avant–garde.*

Prior to the act in the House of the Leningrad Artists' Union, Malevich's body lies in state in his Leningrad flat in the *Ginkhuk* building. Illustrations 20 and 21 seem to repeat in many ways the scenes of the Artists' Union act, i.e., similar relationships are established among Malevich's dead body, the Coffin-Architecton, the central and dominant Black Square and the clear incorporation of the late figurative works. However, the distinctiveness of the act lies in the absolute presence of those late works in the context of the photographs. The works, almost exclusively, on the peasant theme, reinforce their belonging in the full meaning of Suprematism. Malevich's self–portrait of 1933 (cf. Illustration 23) is particularly conspicuous: it is placed on level with the Black Square and Malevich, in his unconventional robe, not only appears to promulgate self-iconization but, with a solemn gesture of his hand, points the way to the portrait's signature, a hardly noticeable black square. The artist, by means of his playful movements, once more proclaims: "I have transformed myself in the zero of form"(12) and at the same time accomplishes the overcoming of this reduction. The “zero of form”, the nothing, is never just “nothingness”, since nothingness is already something.

(12) MI, p. 19.

Prior to every “act” there is Dasein's circumspective attitude towards death. The photographs of the Suprematist Funeral–
Performance are never simply irrelevant and macabre souvenirs of a deceased artist. On the contrary, they gather the fragmentary manifestations of the Suprematist experience and introduce its full meaning as an architectural experience in the sense of Dasein’s building-dwelling. Malevich’s circumspection concerning death is not only expressed in the photographs of the Funeral-Performance and of the dying artist (cf. illustrations 24-28), but equally in several works on the same question (cf. illustrations 29-40). His circumspective attitude is also made manifest in the written works of the artist, which demand careful investigation in order that the full meaning of Suprematism may be established as more than
an obsessive and blind staring at the end or a mere fixing of death as the single Suprematist aim.

If the basic, essential experience of Suprematism-as – Architecture, epitomized by the 1913 Black Square and the Cube-Grave, leads Malevich to a deeper concern with the question of death in the late 1920s, that experience does nothing more than confirm the need which equally emerged in the work of Martin Heidegger, around the same period, of “explicitly restating the question of Being” (13) and, therefore, the question of Dasein. If the artistic truth coming-to-pass in the Suprematist works brings death to the fore, it does so by making death, in a Heideggerian way, into what mortals
should heed as the outstanding “way-to-be” of Dasein. Thus, before proceeding to a clearer determination of the meaning of the Suprematist Square and the Cube, as inherent in the full meaning of Suprematism-as-Architecture, it is important to investigate in greater detail Heidegger’s conception of death and Dasein.


1.3 Heidegger’s Existential conception of Death
"Dasein's possibility of Being-a-Whole and Being-towards-Death," the first chapter of Section two of *Being and Time*, introduces a more detailed presentation of the Heideggerian existential-ontological structure of death. Heidegger's interpretation of the phenomenon of death emerges directly from the necessity of a primordial existential analysis of the entity called *Dasein*. This entity is defined by Heidegger as the **being which understands its existence and for which its very being, as "Being-towards-Death", is an issue**. Dasein's being is an issue in so far as it exists as a potentiality-for-being, i.e., death, as this potentiality, remains continuously outstanding for Dasein's existence.

Of particular interest to our interpretation of Malevich's Suprematist Funeral-Performance are the notions of **Temporality, Fragmentariness** and **Authentic Anticipation** associated with Dasein's being. Temporality is what makes Dasein fundamentally historical. Temporality is defined as the ontological meaning of authentic care. Care emerges from Dasein's being-at-stake, and therefore, care uses and deals with "time." Heidegger explains that *"the 'time' which is experienced in such reckoning is that phenomenal aspect of temporality which is closest to us. Out of it arises the ordinary everyday understanding of time and this understanding evolves into the traditional conception of time"*(14).

Fragmentariness characterizes Dasein in an equally fundamental way, because its being cannot be grasped by us in its entirety, Dasein is fragmentary, it lacks totality, for death is always outstanding in Dasein's existence. Dasein's fragmentary Being-towards-Death is such that its being is annihilated when what remains as potentiality, death, has been liquidated. In Heidegger's words, *"As long as Dasein is as an entity, it has never reached its 'wholeness.' But if it gains such 'wholeness,' this gain becomes the utter loss of Being-in-the-World. In such a case, it can never again be experienced as an entity"*(15).

Authentic anticipation is intrinsic to Dasein's attainment of authenticity in the face of its uttermost possibility of giving itself up in death. This anticipatory understanding of Dasein, however, is better characterized after analyzing Heidegger's notion of the "they-self" and his full existential-ontological conception of death.

According to Heidegger, death only "is" as the cessation of Dasein in the being towards its end of this entity. Death is thus defined as "the possibility of the absolute impossibility of Dasein" (16). He continues:

Thus death reveals itself as that possibility which is one's ownmost, which is non-relational, and which is not to be outstripped.... As such, death is something distinctively impending. Its existential possibility is based on the fact that Dasein is essentially disclosed to itself, and disclosed, indeed, as ahead-of-itself (17).

Only as the possibility thus defined can death be ontologically relevant to mortals. Heidegger emphasizes that the disclosing of death as a possibility-for-being should not be weakened; instead it needs to be understood, cultivated and endured as a possibility in our being towards death.


(17) Ibid.
The "they-self" is an important element in the Heideggerian interpretation of death. It is also particularly relevant to our presentation of the full meaning of Suprematism. In the context of the "they-self," as the public understanding of death and its promulgation by the undifferentiated talk of the citizens, the act of dying is passed off as purely negative and far too "abstract" a notion to have any special role and meaning in the busyness of our real and living world.

What most frequently escapes the interpretation and promulgation of the "they-self" is the fact that the questions of how, when and for what reasons death was introduced into the world and the negativity of death itself as an "affliction" to beings "presuppose an understanding not only of the aggregate of entities as a whole, and especially of the ontological clarification of evil and negativity in general"(18).

The "they" constantly furnishes tranquillization aimed at both the one who is dying and at those who ease the latter's "suffering." For the publicness of the "they" death is therefore "acknowledged" as an unfortunate happening which is identified as a "case of death." The "they" necessarily conceals death as Dasein's uttermost possibility. Heidegger explains that:

... along with the tranquillization, which forces Dasein away from its death, the "they" at the same time puts itself in the right and makes itself respectable by tacitly regulating the way in which one has to comport oneself towards death. It is already a matter of public acceptance that "thinking about death" is a cowardly fear, a sign of insecurity on the part of Dasein, and a sombre way of fleeing from the world. The "they" does not permit us the courage for anxiety in the face of death. The dominance of the manner in which things have been publicly interpreted by the "they" has already decided what state-of-mind is to determine our attitude towards death. In anxiety in the face of death, Dasein is brought face to face with itself as delivered over to that possibility which is not to be outstripped. The "they" concerns itself with transforming this anxiety into fear in the face of an oncoming event. ... What is "fitting" ... according to the unuttered decree of the "they" is indifferent tranquility as to the "fact" that one dies. The cultivation of such a "superior" indifference alienates
Heidegger discusses the need and relevance of an authentic anticipation in the Being-towards-Death of Dasein in terms of freeing oneself to one's own death. This "impassioned freedom towards death" (20) offers Dasein the possibility of being itself, unsupported by the "they-self," and of guarding itself against a lostness in the illusions of the latter.

This impassioned freedom is essentially anxious and it grants Dasein, for the first time, understanding and choice in the face of the other possibilities lying ahead of Dasein's uttermost possibility of giving itself up, the unique and indefinite possibility which is not to be outstripped. The self-understanding of Dasein which accompanies authentic anticipation (as this freedom) is thus described by Heidegger:

In anticipating ... the indefinite certainty of death, Dasein opens itself to a constant threat arising out of its own "there." In this very threat Being-towards-the-end must maintain itself. So little can it tone this down that it must rather cultivate the indefiniteness of the certainty. How is it existentially possible for this constant threat to be genuinely disclosed? All understanding is accompanied by a state-of-mind. Dasein's mood brings it face to face with the throwness of its "that it is there." But the state-of-mind which can hold open the utter and constant threat to itself arising from Dasein's ownmost individualized being is anxiety. In this state-of-mind Dasein finds itself face to face with the "nothing" of the possible impossibility of its existence. ... anticipation utterly individualises Dasein, and allows it in this individualization of itself, to become certain of the totality of its potentiality-for-Being (21).


In the light of the preceding investigations, Malevich's Suprematist experience of the 1913 square and its expression in the 1915 declaration, "I have transformed myself in the zero of form ..." should gain additional definition. The photographs of the Suprematist Funeral-Performance, on the other hand, besides their introduction of the full architectural meaning of Suprematism, present this latter meaning, as utterly individualized, and therefore, as a meaning which demands continuous and radical remaking. The full meaning of Suprematism addresses the mystery of the radical uniqueness and unrepeatability of every existing Dasein. Only in this context René Magritte's declaration that abstraction in art was truly done just once in the beginning of the 20th century can be better appreciated.

Heidegger explains that in the dying of the other a remarkable phenomenon of being is experienced, i.e., Dasein’s change from "Being-in-the-World-towards-Death" to "No-longer-Dasein". The ending of Dasein, the surpassing of its fragmentary condition in the attainment of wholeness escapes the possibility of representation. This is exactly so because of the impossibility of taking the other's dying away from him. Perhaps Marcel Duchamp's epitaph, "D'ailleurs c'est toujours l'autre qui meurt," should be read in the context of these considerations.

(22) MI, p. 19.
We can never genuinely experience the cessation of being of the other; we
can at the most be there alongside. "Death does indeed reveal itself as a loss,
but a loss such as is experienced by those who remain. In suffering this loss,
however, we have no way of assessing the loss-of-Being as such which the
dying man 'suffers'," Heidegger observes.\(^{23}\)

When we speak, therefore, of the full meaning of Suprematism as utterly
"individualized" and in a continuous radical remaking we only attempt to
emphasis the fact that the essence of dying is something every Dasein must
take upon itself at a time. If death can be anything at all it only is mine. We can
only share the uttermost mystery of the constitutive mineness of dying and this
mystery waxes all the more formidable for us, modern men, living in an
apparently godless world.


1.4 The Suprematist Square, the Cube and Malevich's Writings

This section attempts to answer the basic questions: "What is the Square?"
and "What is the Cube?". The attractive simplicity of these questions cannot
sufficiently convey, however, the difficulty presented by Malevich's writings as
the source for our answers. This is due to the following facts: in the first place,
the Square and the Cube, even though distinct as Suprematist elements, blur
their boundaries relatively to the additional concepts Malevich introduces in his
explanations of those two basic elements (we need only to observe, in this
respect, their relationship as "matrix and diamond," i.e., the Cube develops out
of the Square matrix). Secondly, the written works themselves, as we have
already declared, offer great difficulties in view of Malevich's particularly
winding literary style (this style is simultaneously the outcome of his close
involvement with the Futurist \textit{Zaum} poets and a form of defense in the face of
the post-revolutionary political climate) (24). In any case, we are faced with a hermeneutical challenge all the more intriguing.

(24) Concerning the use of contradiction in the form of defense relative to the written works, a document was left in Berlin by Malevich on the occasion of his 1927 exhibition (cf. Illustration 41).
1.4.1 What is the Square?

Malevich provides the following rich and detailed description:

Suprematism is a new, non-objective system of relations between elements, by means of which sensations are expressed. The Suprematist Square is the first element out of which the Suprematist method is built.

The Square framed with white was the first form of non-objective sensation; the white field is not a field framing the black square, but only the sensation of the desert, of non-existence, in which the square form appears as the first non-objective element of sensation. It is not the end of art, as people suppose even now, but the beginning of true essence.

Suprematism is that end and beginning where sensations are uncovered, where art emerges 'as such', faceless.

As an element, the Suprematist Square corresponds to the drawn line, used by man in prehistoric time to express his sensation through repetition, not that of an ornament, only of rhythm.

The Suprematist Square in its mutations creates new shapes of elements and interrelationships between them, depending upon diverse sensations. The suprematist attempts to clarify for himself the facelessness of the world, the non-objectivity of art. This means to transcend the circle of efforts to comprehend the world, its representations and sensations.(25)
The Suprematist Square is the first basic element or "form of non-objective sensation" which develops from the whiteness of the sensation of non-existence, i.e., the Suprematist abyss or the Malevichean zero. The Square is the expression of an elementary and essential artistic experience whose structure oscillates between sensation and numbness, one and nothing, presence and total withdrawal into absence (“concealment of being” to stay with Heidegger). In view of the artist's Funeral-Performance, the Square is also the expression of the mystery pervading Dasein's existence in its being towards its withdrawal from the world.

Whiteness, the "ground" allowing the emergence of the Suprematist Square is related, as the Nemchinovka backdrop suggests, to the collapse of the peasant world and the advent of the metallic world of the city. Malevich closely associated whiteness with a metropolitan condition of art; whiteness, however, implies a condition of modern art whose uniqueness goes beyond that collapse or transitional event:

...our century is a huge boulder aimed with all its weight into space. From this follows the collapse of all foundations in art, as our consciousness is transferred onto completely different ground ...

The development of white is not limited to a colour basis, or a result of the oscillation of colour. It is an expression of something more profound, it points to my transformation in time. My imagining of colour stops being colourful, it merges into one colour-white.

We must depart towards pure foundations as world law and build form upon it. (26)

(25) MIV, pp. 146-47.
(26) MIV, pp.34-35.
The oscillation inherent in the experience of the Square, in Malevich's perception, conveys the non-objectivity of the essence of art, an essence which modern man, through struggle and difficulties, is destined to address:

*There will be a struggle between this essence and the tavern-like construction, i.e., between sense and non-sense, feast days and non-feast days; and the empty must overcome the non-empty, and the feast days must overcome the non-feast days. ... For in man himself there is a feast. And even now labour cannot be without it. But sooner or later, the non-objective system in painting which opens up the essence of art will become a power because first of all it has clarified the essence of all manifestations, whether that be religion or art or economic laws of the bases...*(27)

The uniqueness of the modern condition of art and the related struggle of modern man with the clarification of the "essence of all manifestations" do not, however, stand apart from the ancient mystery of the construction of the world, "in that man has to attain, study and build special pieces of apparatus to reveal the world's reality, to penetrate the nebula in the abyss of non-existence" (28).

The uniqueness of the "white" modern metropolis, with its technological-objectivist consciousness, equally speaks of man's existence as a form of striving. "But what existence is man striving for? He is striving for rest, i.e., inactivity, and each of his perfect machines speaks of that rest." (29) Still addressing the striving of modern man's existence in the context of technological production, Malevich speaks of the Suprematist sensations in relation to *stimulus*:
But as soon as material consciousness becomes simply a "struggle for survival" and a struggle with nature, then I consider conquest senseless. All production as existence ... is compelled to oppose production as struggle. Man exists by production. But perhaps existence does not lie in my creating objects, but also in the spirit of stimulus existing in man; perhaps the mere striving to comprehend the incomprehensible is also existence. Man may exist not only because he thinks but because he is stimulated, which is the first principle of his life. Thought, after all is only realized stimulus. Existence is action, but it is possible to act and still not be...(30)

(27) MIII, p.253.
(28) MI, p. 213.
(29) MI, p.213-14.
(30) MI, p. 213.

When Malevich speaks of "the sensation of the desert" in connection with the Suprematist experience of the Square, he is therefore speaking of the twofold meaning in the Heideggerian conception of truth as the self-concealing disclosure of Aletheia. The Suprematist Square holds darkness against light and non-existence against the sensation of life itself, and thus, it brings to the fore the groundlessness and yet the absolute necessity of art, as an aspect of contemporary mankind standing in the coming-to-pass of truth.

The role of the Suprematist is, thus, "to clarify for himself the facelessness of the world, the non-objectivity of art." A special kind of cognisance is, nevertheless, required for the fulfillment of this role: a non-representational logic which transcends the traditional efforts of logic to comprehend the world. Heidegger speaks of the singular and difficult task of modern thinking, i.e., to think "against itself": "The task of thinking would then be the surrender of previous thinking to the determination of the matter for
thinking."(31) In connection with this singular cognizance Malevich declares:
Darkness is our existence, which directs our consciousness towards forming darkness ... and it appears that the sun's light only manifests that which is hidden in gloom; but the functions of cognition lie in a different source of light cognition. (32)

In such a way religion, science and art strive towards cognizance "of the abstract world," each one with its own method, united in the end by one aim: "the cognisance of the world as such"... (33)

"The world" is "the world" and there cannot be various points of view about it. The silence of "the world" troubles our brain and a wish arises in the brain to pierce this silence and to find in it a tongue and a word, as though there is a wish to smash the wisdom of silence with a word, and therefore, in order to pierce, it destroys visuality and organizes an instrument of insertion, but instruments cannot insert themselves for they are part of the silence ...(34)

(31) Heidegger, M. "The End of Philosophy and the Task of Thinking", in Basic Writings, op. cit., p.392.

(32) MII, p.76.

(33) MII, p.38.

(34) MIII, p.57.

One last aspect in Malevich's definition of the Suprematist Square needs to be addressed, i.e., the fact that the square mutates and creates "new shapes of elements and interrelationships between them, depending upon diverse sensations." This aspect refers both to the expression of the Suprematist Square in red, black and white - against the constant white background - and to its development in the form of the Suprematist cube due to the Square's inherent architectural meaning.
The colour movement of the square is the outcome of the general movement towards the metallic culture of the metropolis, where the highest intensity of white light of metallic origin is reached. Moving from the countryside (red), through the city (black) and arriving at the metropolis (white), the Suprematist Square scatters colour in whiteness. Even though Malevich mentions struggle and "revolution" in the sense of the difficulties associated with modern man's adaptation to the non-objectivity of the essence of art, the attempt to relate the Red Square with political upheavals goes against Malevich's perception, his criticism of cultural ideologies and his basic anarchical (in a broader sense) stance.

1.4.2 What Is the Cube?

In the same way that the Suprematist Square is designated by Malevich "Formula of Suprematism-1913," the Cube is defined as the 1915 spatial "formula" of Suprematism. As shown in illustrations 42 to 44, the cube is the formula whose "disintegration" and "elongation" engenders the basic architectural meaning of Suprematism. Those processes grant a new aspect to architecture, outside every practical goal. The Cube-Grave provides us with "architecture as such."

The expression "formula" is interpreted by Malevich not in the sense of a prescription but rather as the primary truth of the artistic problems of "new art" in their formative capacity. Together with the more straightforward characterization of illustrations 42 and 43, the definition of the Suprematist Cube-Formula, in its inextricable relatedness to the Square, is also set forth, even though in more opaque terms, along the artist's written works. Due to the fact that these works, to a great extent, discuss the meaning of the Cube within the framework of concepts of equal relevance to both the Cube and the Square, we consider it more adequate to pursue further clarification of the former - as the locus allowing the movement from the canvas surface into the space of architecture- in the following subsection.
This should also allow us to gain further clarification concerning both concepts which are integral to the Suprematist thought.

In any case, we now gather some excerpts of Malevich's writings which specifically address the Cube as a Suprematist basic element. They should suffice as samples of Malevich's literary style and possibly of his use of contradictions as a form of defense, to stay with his declarations in the 1927 Berlin document (Illustration 41). The Suprematist Cube, which he insists on seeing in the house of every "Leninist workman" is thus addressed:
All paths, whichever path you were to choose and tread, if you are going towards perfection, will converge into the corner ["The corner" most probably refers to the well—known arrangement of the Black Square in the 0.10 Last Futurist Exhibition of 1915]. Whether you were to walk in the heights (the ceiling), down below (the floor), on the sides (the wall), the result of your path will be the cube, as the cubic is the fullness of your comprehension and is perfection. The attainment will be expressed in a cube, in something which does not exist in reality. The cube will be an invented sign. The cube will be a symbol which man wants to turn into the fullness of knowledge. This is his concept of perfect fullness. In the cube lies all man's culture and development, by the cube the first epoch or the first cycle of the objective cognition of ideas will be symbolised, the new epoch will move towards a new creation of form, which he thinks to achieve because he will move the cube of his knowledge into space - farther; or the cube as mobile space will create a new body, a new space. This new path, the path of logical analysis of ideas, which answers the question what is to be done with what has been created by the cube, nature, the world. But there is another tendency, it leads along the path of art which affects the cube in reverse (35). The cube has moved further and forms a new body and is expressed by Cubism, as the correspondence to the logical analysis of ideas, and it answers the question: what is to be done? This is one interpretation of Cubism; but there is another which says that Cubism is the dissolution of the cube and the emancipation of consciousness which will have to stand face to face with non-objectivity (36).
The cube of eternity must be placed as a sign of the union of the dead man with "him" (37) ["him" refers to Lenin and his politico-philosophical activities. Malevich's critique of Leninism and its relevance to the cube is discussed in the next subsection 1.4.3].

The cube is the completion of all noises and misfortunes which had existed because they were one-dimensional, two-dimensional, or three-dimensional. They followed all the teachings [Lenin's] and in the end, in Communism, they must finally arrive at the last organized cube, the cube of eternity, i.e., of rest" (38).

The cube of eternity, eternal glory, immortality, death, hell, eternal fire, symbolism, the law, the teacher, the disciples, the idea, the image - all this is
the invention projected from the senselessness of what we call matter or thought. Matter may also appear as an invention, projected from thought; then the world as nature of phenomena is nothing but an invention; but if the world as matter is not an invention but matter, then there is no cube of eternity, or eternity itself, there is no eternal glory, no immortality, no death (39).

The cube is the result of all man's strivings, the cube is a logically constructed mousetrap from which painting frees itself for the first time, for the first time it directs itself towards non-objectivity. Cubism is the culminating point of the culture of painting, as Communism is the culminating point of socialist culture; the difference lies only in that the cube in painting already is dissolved in movement, disobjectivised, but the economic cube goes toward the final point of the objective idea (40).

In the end, if Malevich's discourse appears to wander along internal contradictions (as a form of defense or not), and refuses conclusive statements and a final meaning to the Cube, these conditions should be read as intrinsic to the full meaning of the Suprematist Cube-Grave. In so far as the cube is something it is in the same way that Dasein's death is.

The relationship the Suprematist Cube bears to mortality gains a similar expression in the work of Adolf Loos: for Loos the question of death is clearly relevant to architectural meaning (cf. his 1910 essay entitled "Architecture"). The similarity is all the more interesting with regards to Loos' 1931 sketch for his own tomb: a simple granite cube - with his name engraved at the centre - standing on a flat slab (cf. Illustration 45). Loos' cube, as well as Malevich's, are the outcome of a long process of investigation into the modern condition of architecture-as-art. This essential investigation has taken them both to the same fundamental experience of a limit, the limit of Dasein's mortality. The latter is the sine qua non condition for the attainment of a dwelling and thus of a genuine building, to employ Heidegger's terms. Architecture and art stand undifferentiated on this threshold: the primary geometry of Loos' and Malevich's Cube delimit the place where architecture-as-art continually begins
and ends.

(35) As an opposition to the "path of logical analysis of ideas"?

(36) MIII, p. 354-55.

(37) MIII, p. 325.

(38) MIII, p. 324.

(39) MIII, p. 341.

(40) MIII, p. 355.
1.4.3 Additional Concepts in Malevich's Written Works and Their Relevance to the Definitions of the Square and the Cube

It is important to emphasize firstly that the extensive written works of Malevich are not determined, in their origin and content, by his growing interest in philosophy since the *Black Square* of 1913. On the contrary, writing became one way of understanding and "grounding" the artistic problems inherent in the suprematist experience; writing became a special form of articulation of the deeply philosophical character of that artistic experience, a character which Malevich describes as "cold and unsmiling." The philosophy of Suprematism "is sceptical towards all human thought and aspirations, it finds that nothing can [my underlining] be manifested in the world ... the opposite is established to objectivity, i.e., non—objectivity; 'nothing' is juxtaposed to 'something'...."

Being sceptical towards established existences, secured cultures and styles does not, however, prevent Suprematism from being frequently interpreted as "mystical" and even derogatorily as "esoteric." Furthermore, Malevich's non—objectivity and his realization of the fact that the "nothing" manifests itself in the world, render his thinking Nietzschean and nihilistic in the eyes of many historians, even though in a simplistic and negativistic fashion.

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MIII, p. 82.
Suprematism is indeed mystical in terms of Heidegger's understanding of the "holy." What in a special sense is "holy," according to Heidegger, is that towards which mortals are pious. The piety of mortals is cultivated in that which, in all presencing, manifests itself by withdrawing from view. A questioning which arises from a prior listening to this concealment is what Heidegger calls the "piety of thinking."

Suprematism is also Nietzschean and nihilistic. Nevertheless it is never merely "nihilistic" in the sense of a shallow pessimism. It is nihilistic in the sense of Nietzsche's active—ecstatic—classical nihilism, a "classical" nihilism which, as a historical movement, not only knocks persistently at the door of modern mankind but "extends far behind us and reaches far beyond us."¹⁴² The white Malevichian "nothing" brings in its wake Nietzschean nihilism properly understood as the devaluation and reevaluation of the highest values hitherto, i.e., metaphysics in the entirety of its history.

The following notions are developed in Malevich's written work and can shed some light in the definitions of the square and the cube as basic suprematist elements. They are: the geometric nature of the cube and the square; the fourth, fifth and sixth dimensions; sloth and rest, and finally, Malevich's interpretation of Leninism.

The geometrical nature of the cube and the square and also the geometrical character of "abstraction" — as the fragmentary meaning of Suprematism—as—Architecture—should be understood in the light of Malevich's relationship to the futurist Zaum poets, and particularly, to Victor Khlebnikov. This geometrical nature is, at the same time, inseparable from the fullness of the suprematist experience. Geometry is seen by Malevich as closely linked with
mathematics which, he writes, "gives birth to numbers, indefinite, like angels." This indefiniteness is what allows Khlebnikov to hear the rustling of "the great sacred forest of numbers" and to search for "the central number that would connect all phenomena." Khlebnikov also sought, by means of numbers, to find the equation of history, the "boards of destiny." Malevich's geometrical concept of the cube and the square addresses a similar stance: "... in the material world the cube does not exist. Geometry attempts to metamorphose matter into geometric realism, but geometrical bodies are not bodies, they are those same icon—ideas ..." 

Heidegger explains the mathematical, the mathémata, as "that 'about' things which we really already know. Therefore we do not first get it out of things, but, in a certain way, we bring it already with us." In this sense of the mathémata numbers are particularly learnable as mathematical.

The fourth, fifth and sixth dimensions are closely related as formative conditions for the suprematist cube. The notion of the fourth dimension and the introduction of non-eucledian geometry acquired a special meaning for the art movements of the early twentieth century in Russia and in Western Europe. In the case of the Russian avant-garde those new conceptions were presented specially by P.D. Ouspensky's "Tertium Organum" and his discussions of C.H. Hinton's "The Fourth Dimension" of 1904. Malevich acknowledges the artistic 'relevance of the fourth dimension but, together with his friend Mikhail

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45 Ibid.

46 Malevich, p. 356.

Matyushin, he warns of the danger inherent in the fact that everything new in art or science should necessarily emerge from this new dimension.

Malevich sees the fourth dimension as a new problem in painting, a new point of movement:

... one cannot say anything against the reality of the fourth dimension, it was an inflexible fact, it is a true authenticity which will always leave me in an equilibrium of relationships with phenomena. The fourth dimension is a kinetic tape on which the object is unrolled in the fourth state, disclosing its whole in elements\(^48\) [my underlining].

The discovery in painting of the four-dimensional measure of phenomena was, for the artist, a last judgement on the world cognised by him in three-dimensional vision.\(^49\)

In Malevich's perception, therefore, the fourth dimension is an undeniable phenomenon by means of which painterly elements on canvas as well as in space are dynamically rendered in their various aspectual differences. Still he warns us of the fact that reason may imprison art "in a box of square dimensions."\(^50\) This imprisonment, represented by a restrictive dependency on the dynamic rendering of the fourth dimension, engenders the "danger" of two additional "dimensions": "foreseeing the danger of a fifth and sixth dimension, I fled, since the fifth and sixth dimensions form a cube in which art will stifle. Escape before it is too late."

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\(^{48}\) MI, p. 17.

\(^{49}\) Ibid.

\(^{50}\) Ibid.
This association of dimensions seems to suggest more than a simple analogy to the six sides of a cube; it stands rather for a basic artistic process pervading the modern experience of art and the suprematist experience in particular. The fifth dimension, or "economy," is determined by the *Black Square* and the sixth develops out of the conditions established by the former fifth dimension, thus generating the suprematist cube. Both dimensions, as Malevich clearly states, carry a danger which includes even the very possibility of the stifling of art. Despite the danger, only in the cube can a fullness be attained. Speaking of the fourth dimension and its dynamic rendering of the various aspectual differences of a painterly component, Malevich insists that "every such aspectual difference is an element of the whole which is completed only in the form of the cube"[52] [my underlining].

The suprematist basic elements, the square and the cube, are in their origin "dangerous." In their formative process lurks a danger in which art, imprisoned by reason can stifle. We, nevertheless, need to escape this danger in some way. How can we? We hear in Heidegger's analysis of the danger of the technological *enframing*:

Could it be that the fine arts are called to poetic revealing? Could it be that revealing lays claim to the arts most primarily, so that they for their part may expressly foster the growth of the saving power, may awaken and found anew our vision of that which grants our trust in it?

Whether art may be granted this highest possibility of its essence in the midst of the extreme danger, no one can tell. Yet we can be astounded. Before what? Before the other possibility: that the frenziedness of technology may entrench itself everywhere to such an extent that someday, throughout

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MIII, p. 55.
everything technological the essence of technology may come to presence in the coming—to—pass of truth.\textsuperscript{53}

The fifth dimension, economy, is determined by the suprematist experience of the square. The economic suprematist surface of the square is, according to Malevich, the absolute expression of modernity. "I declare economy to be the new fifth dimension which evaluates and defines the modernity of the arts and creative works," he writes.\textsuperscript{54} This "economic" and evaluative nature of the suprematist square, as analyzed in Chapter Two of this dissertation, will introduce the late figurative works as devaluating and reevaluating Suprematism in the sense of a secured abstractionist value in art.

The economy of the suprematist square, in the sense of the evaluative process described by Malevich, takes the canvas to a limit condition. This is particularly noticeable in the case of the 1917—18 White Square on a White Background, where the empty canvas goes back onto itself. This condition of extreme economy of painterly means could be designated as a "negative phenomenology" of the canvas and of the work of art. "Negative" in so far as this return onto itself of the canvas introduces groundlessness, the concealment of art's essence.

The economic fifth dimension inherent in the suprematist square also addresses technology as the present essence of humanity. Malevich declares that "art in the collective must take the road of world technology and consequently every invention on canvas will have to correspond to the system of the world's technological transformation."\textsuperscript{55} He insists that world technology aims at the

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\textsuperscript{54} MI, p. 83. MIV, p.
\end{flushright}
solution of a multitude of questions by means of the defacement of the individual and personal and the reduction of the many "faces of the world" to a unity, a single system of perfection. However, he believes that "one of the most perfect systems is man who solves a multitude of questions by the action of his 'being'.

Technology, under such names as geometric economy or fifth dimension, is therefore an essential constituent of the meaning of the suprematist square. Malevich equates the action of the "being" of man to both the technological reduction of many questions to one question and to the perfection of machines. He claims that the whole world of nature and things "in their own"share the same essence. This essence represents the establishment of "the reincarnation of the green world of flesh and bones into a new minority of perfection [and] ... man will stand at the centre of the new world as a Deity, and ... will assume the concept that he is one of the units belonging to the power of the Deity which exists above him." Therefore, this technological essence is a new "entrance", an invitation still unheeded by man, particularly with regards to its holiness and mystery.

Malevich's analysis of the economy of the suprematist square in terms of the relationship of the "new" artist to the technological essence of mankind is also expressed as follows:

... and only the God of Technology can breathe the living spirit into them [machines]. This is the new artist of the World picture. When the forehead on the forge will transform itself into a palette, then a new triumph will come and humanity will achieve its true

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\[57\] MIV, pp. 65-66.

\[s6\] Ibid.
nature: the picture, and its slogan will be "picture" [my underlining].

This technological—economic reduction of the essence of humanity to "the picture," in many aspects, parallels the Heideggerian critique of the modern age as the product of the representational building of the modern subjectum. By means of this building, in the form of a determination of the world as "picture" or as a "world view," modern man sets all the standards and directives for the whole of entities. Heidegger explains that this representational building of the world acquires full sway in the phenomenon he designates "the gigantic":

... as soon as the gigantic in planning and calculating and adjusting and making secure shifts over out of the quantitative and becomes a special quality, then what is gigantic, and what can seemingly always be calculated completely, becomes, precisely through this, incalculable. This becoming incalculable remains the invisible shadow that is cast around all things everywhere when man has been transformed into subjectum and the world into picture...

By means of this shadow the modern world extends itself out into a space withdrawn from representation, and so lends to the incalculable the determinateness peculiar to it, as well as a historical uniqueness. This shadow, however, points to something else, which is denied to us of today to know ... but man will never be able to experience and ponder this that is denied so long as he dawdles about in the mere negating of the age.

58 MIV, p. 51.

1977, pp. 135-36.
The reduction of a multitude of questions to a single question of perfection and unity as a characteristic of the economic–technological arrival of modern mankind, according to Malevich, is a strong systematic organization of all questions and this organization moves towards its own apotheosis. He declares:

... wakening the world of worlds, as one single body of community in action, and then, from the doe of the desert, one single indivisible collective in the image of the human "being" — incarnating in itself all "I" that is individual — will travel like a hurricane towards an endless desert of space or through a system and economy, through the synthesis of synthesis it will achieve an absolute in itself, a solution of all questions, it will hang above the desert as non–existence, non–movement; consequently, when it has achieved perfection, an aspect of the world enters non–movement, i.e., ceases to live, for it is perfect and free from movement towards life and towards death. It appears that the perfection of the human "being" will only be achieved when it will be victorious over the question of life and death of movement [my underlining]. Then it will show itself in the image of an answer which will be both immortal and a lifeless view of his face."

Sloth and rest are interchangeable in their basic meaning, as determined by Malevich's writings. The 1921 essay entitled "Sloth — The Real Truth of Humanity" presents the following addition to the title: "Work as a Means of Attaining Truth, The Philosophy of the Socialist Idea." Not only this addition but also the very title (Sloth, Len’ in Russian, is a pun on the name of Lenin) and the whole critical evaluation behind the essay convey Malevich's

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60 cf. MIV. pp. 73-85.
efforts to clarify the interdependency of truth, sloth (or rest) and human work. Malevich is particularly concerned with an analysis of the ideological fights between capitalism and "the system of socialism leading to communism"\textsuperscript{62} and with introducing his own interpretation of Leninism.

Despite their disputes and mutual accusations, capitalism and socialism, in Malevich's understanding, aim the same basic truth, the attainment of a human state of sloth. "This truth is hidden in the depths of the unconscious, but for some reason, until now one had not become aware of it and no system of work anywhere proclaims the motto: 'The truth of your movement is the path towards sloth'."\textsuperscript{63}

Malevich wants both to remove the brand of shame from sloth's forehead and, rather than being "the mother of all vices," to declare it — as rest — to be the beginning of all human work and concerns. The interdependence of work, truth and sloth consists in the human striving towards sloth, which, in spite of being a perilous state, is also the main impetus to work as a form of overcoming that state. As the hidden force behind human work, sloth is a "godly inaction" in so far as God has been interpreted as omniscience and omnipresence withdrawn into rest after the work of creation. Man strives towards this "restful" state even with his machines; and the attainment of this state excludes every "I" and creates the universe by "let there be." Malevich concludes:

\begin{quote}
The danger of sloth is great, for it is a force which can transform everything into non—existence, i.e., non—existence will overcome man; he fights against this with his existence, i.e., manufacture. Non—existence
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{62} MIV, p. 74.
\textsuperscript{63} MIV, p. 75.
is a threat that man will be deprived of all goods, including sloth."^64

The interconnection between work — in the sense of technological utilitarianism — and rest is also established by the striving of utilitarianism towards a "world of rest," as the non—objectivity of Suprematism. Thus the suprematist notion of rest defines a non—objective abstract, or simply non—objectivity as the essence of art as such. Art's essence remains immovable, it lacks a specific knowledge of aims and ideas. However, everything emerges out of this uncognizable hidden essence and seeks it; everything, including our "world technology" happens out of such seeking. Malevich also attributes the names "eternal beauty" and "eternal rest" to that non—objective essence. Because rest is outside cognisance it plays; and its playing is the condition for every experience and scrutiny.

Malevich sees modern times faced with a choice, i.e, balanced between two gravities: rest and utilitarianism; art and technology. The question of priority and of how to choose becomes a fundamental question for modern man.

Malevich's interpretation of Leninism is closely linked with his discussion of sloth and rest. The relevance of that interpretation to the full meaning of Suprematism is underlined by the fact that Malevich's project of 1924 for Lenin's burial vault is precisely a cube. A brief article in the magazine Art News, also from the year 1924, makes reference to this project:

Malevich who, like all other Bolshevist artists, has been working to express the greatness of Lenin in a model for his monument, proudly exhibited a huge pedestal composed of a mass of agricultural and industrial tools and machinery. On top of the pile was the "figure" of Lenin — a simple cube without
64 MIV, p. 83.
"insignia [my underlining]. "But where is Lenin?" the artist was asked. With an injured air he pointed to the cube. Anybody could see that if they had a soul, he added. But the judges without hesitation turned down the work of art. There must be a real figure of Lenin, they reason, if the single—minded peasant is to be inspired."

Malevich only investigated Leninism in its connection to Marxist historical and dialectal materialism with the intent of critically highlighting some of Leninism's aspects which, to some extent, proved relevant to his own art and thinking.

He argued that the strength and potentiality of an awareness of Marxist—Leninist materialism was lost with the iconization and transformation of Lenin into an ideological figure. "Thus the revolution ended with the victory of something which has turned into spirit, and according to his disciples will soar above the world in the name of spirit," Malevich proclaims.

To the extent that the Marxist—Leninist notions of historical and dialectical materialism, stemming from the Hegelian dialectical method, claim the mutability of all existing social forms and the passing of the "ideology" or truth sustaining those forms, Malevich understood that Lenin, through the utilitarian object, was indeed seeking non—objectivity. Malevich wanted to focus on what, in the first place, allows this undeniable mutability of the "material circumstances of life" to take place.

Malevich's interest in the significance of Lenin's death to the outcome of the Russian Revolution, as depicted by his project of 1924, lies in the fact that the former event brought to the fore the undeniable historicity of the very doctrine of historical materialism and thus introduced the "cubic—quadrangular"


66 MIII, p. 331.
nature of our own contemporaneity. The death of Lenin supported Malevich's own conception of matter. He writes that matter "cannot be grasped by thought, it leaves behind it something which cannot be embraced by intelligence: nothing." Lenin's death nurtured in him the hope that the world might be free from the attempts of men to grasp and determine it as their own possession, and thus, be comprehended as such, as the "non—objective world." He observes:

... Capitalists rise up against Communism because the last stronghold is disappearing, the last basis, the foundation for existence; abstraction is coming to them, non—objectivity; their activity has no foundation of object from which and on which to develop new phenomena; some have capital, others have the object. Communists, too, object to non—objectivity, since, for them existence without an object, like the capitalist without capital, cannot be. With non—objectivity, disappears their means of reflecting environment and portraits, propaganda through the object; propaganda through capital, in the other case. The non—objective is incomprehensible. New art raised a storm of indignation in society both before and after the revolution, to the effect that it is non—objective and abstract, that the face, customs, and life of the objectivists, capitalism as well as communism, are not reflected but, on the contrary, deflected ... matter does not have an object—portrait, a concrete fulfilment, it is fluid and dynamic.

Leninism is, therefore, interpreted by Malevich as the "materialistic weltanschauung" whose historical relevance to the modern condition cannot be denied. He emphasizes the aspects of matter, the impermanence of truth as expressed in ideologies and finally, the sensorial experience of the "earth

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67 Mill, p. 349.

"However, Leninism, vis-à-vis his non-objectivity, still keeps to the prejudices and determinism about life and death, i.e., Leninist materialism does not work out the question of the static and uncognizable rest as an element of the non-objective."
II. A "Miserable Business": Malevich's Late Figurative Works and Their Relevance to Suprematism—as—Architecture

II.1 The Figurative Works as the Consummation of Suprematism

A "miserable business": this is El Lissitsky's characterization of Malevich's late works. Lissitsky, a close collaborator of Malevich's and a former member of the Unovis group in Vitebsk, did not seem capable of seeing in Malevich's "representational art" anything beyond a sheer retrograde attitude in the face of the widely proclaimed newness and originality of modern art. Like so many avant-garde artists, El Lissitsky could not see in the late works what this supposed obliteration of the way opened by modern art really meant. Unlike Malevich, they remained unable to assess the essential signification of such terms as originality and newness.

Malevich's insightful perception, however, gave him the courage to penetrate deeper grounds and allowed him the flexibility to move from the initial and authentic enthusiasm of Unovis (Utverditeli Novogo), "The Champions of the New" and from the direction taken by El Lissitsky's Prouns (Proekt Utvershdeniya Novogo), "The project for the affirmation of the New," towards a critical maturity which granted him the possibility of analyzing the meaning of that enthusiasm with newness, and therefore, of clarifying and broadening the fundamental suprematist experience.

Miserable, indeed, is the shallowness of so many historiological interpretations frequently associated with the late figurative works. The former

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A letter from El Lissitsky to his wife, dated 19th July 1930, reads: "He [Malevich] is getting old and is in a very difficult position. He is to go abroad in the autumn and is painting, painting representational art and signing it 1910, etc., a miserable business. He does it very seriously and thinks he will trap fools." cf. El Lissitsky. London: Thames and Hudson, 1968, p. 95
never seem to reach the essential relevance of those works to the whole
constituted by Suprematism—as—Architecture. Zhadova, for instance, not only
treats Malevich's Suprematism in a too formalistic way but she also hinders
the possibility of unprejudiced clarity by adopting, as a Russian writer, a too
nationalistic and defensive attitude. The important, even though secondary,
role played by the increasing Stalinist repression is totally absent and she
does not seem to realize blatant inadequacies as these:

.... During the years just before and after 1930 when
the aesthetic limitations of Suprematism and its
hermetic concentration on the beauty of abstract
concepts of space, movement and time [my underlining], stood out more and more starkly. It
could now be seen that the beauty inherent in the
concepts of science and technology had not done
away with the enjoyment of virgin nature and the
cultural treasures accumulated by mankind, as had
seemed in the days of cubo—futurism.2

Malevich, as an active man of his time, set out
during his closing years to find in painting new ways
of making contact with the spectator, while
contributing to the development of neo—realism, about
to become one of the most important movements of
progressive painting in the twentieth century3 [my
underlining].

The question becomes all the more urgent as concerns the meaning
Malevich attributes to his figurative works, meaning that not only does not
deny his preceding, "more" suprematist works, but rather reinforces the
essence of the

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suprematist experience of 1913. Malevich, as a matter of fact, had overtly declared that nothing deserves more attention and considerate study than the great classical art of the past. He even recommended his students to have a "classical" attitude towards art. However, we need to understand what Malevich thought in the word "classical". A text of 1927 reads:

In my suprematist architecture I see the renewal of a classical architecture which, for a long time, creates beauty only. And art gives the present along with the whole past and the whole future.

"Classical" and simply "artistic" cannot be differentiated in Malevich's language to the extent that we associate "artistic" with an essential understanding of art.

A clarification of Malevich's "classicism" — as the late figurative works are most often seen — basically demands that the works be properly located in the kind of relationship they seek to establish with Suprematism in its non—figurative period. As in the case of his writings, the contradictions may have helped Malevich in bypassing the pressures of the Stalinist years, but never do they constitute a mere retreat in the face of those pressures.

In a particular way, a more careful study of Malevich's self portrait of 1933 (cf. Illustration 23), especially in the light of the role played by that painting in the artist's funeral—performance, and also a consideration of other relevant figurative works in that same context, allow a better understanding of the "oppositional" figurative turning of the early 1930s. In many ways this turning is already present, much earlier, in Malevich's philosophical concerns, as made manifest by his written works. The seeming contradiction — figurative

\[\text{4} \] "Suprématisme—architecture," in Maléïitch, Centre Georges Pompidou, Musée national d'Art moderne, 1980, p. 38—39 [my translation].
versus abstract — proves to be a mousetrap into which those following Malevich's way inattentively may easily fall.

Anna Leporskaya, a pupil and close friend of Malevich who made herself present at Malevich's apartment during the period of the artist's sickness and also at his "lit de mort" (cf. Illustration 26—28 and 46), assures us that the mousetrap of the figurative works should indeed be avoided. She wrote in a brief essay for a catalogue exhibition of 1978:

Malevich did not know, did not understand what exactly constituted the Black Square. He realized that this was such an important event in his artistic career that for a whole week (so he himself related) he could neither drink and eat or sleep. The subsequent "gemmation" of the square, its transition to a more dynamic state, to a higher temperature, its move through the Red Square to the white (as being the condition of maximum dynamism) — this gave him room to develop and brought him to his Architektony.

Energetic development of analysis of reason and consciousness (analyses that were often not recorded) gave rise to a school of new art, of new proportions which was called Unovis. By then the new suprematist order had attained the level of classical relationships and proportions and thus earned the right to live and to develop, but not only in the work of Kazimir Severinovich. Here we have a link in the chain of art which, so to say, remained incomplete despite the impetuous development of Suprematism [my underlining]. This is the so called figurative art that brought Malevich back to nature, to the portrait, to life painting. Many of the portraits painted in the early 1930s also contained elements of Suprematism...

These works should not be regarded as an unexpected or new course of development, but as the evolution of the colour principle germane to
Malevich's early works and generated by his observations of nature. This is the artist's consummate and precious creation connecting his early art with the last period just before his death [my underlining]. This constitutes the spiritual content of Kazimir Severinovich, powerful and deep, rich in its unity.

II.2 The Figurative Works in the Context of the Funeral—Performance

Once again Malevich's funeral-performance may provide access to the meaning the artist attaches to those "miserable" works. As illustrations 19 to 22 clearly show, the "purely" suprematist works are basically absent with the exception of the centrally positioned Black Square (the "Basic Suprematist Element"), his coffin (with the deceased body) and the Lukos Architecton. This "more" abstract world has been surrounded by a large "figurative" one, which is essentially represented by a throng of peasants, basically rendered as featureless and limbless human beings.

Particularly "ob-scene" in the context of the performance is his 1933 self—portrait, obtrusively flanking the centrality of the abstract world of the Black Square (cf. Illustrations 20 and 21). We can identify, in illustration 19, The Portrait of the Artist's Daughter, Una of 1934 (Illustration 11) whereas in illustration 20 we identify, moving towards the left from the central Black Square: Self—Portait of 1933 (Illustration 23); Peasant Woman (Illustration 5); Harvest (Illustration 47); Head of a Peasant (Illustration 4); Peasants (Illustration 6); Suprematism: Female Figure (Illustration 48); Torso: Half—Figure with a Pink Face (Illustration 49). In relation to Illustrations 21 and 22, we select, for the former: Portrait of Una (Illustration 11); Two Male Figures

As suggested in Chapter I, Malevich's works concerning the peasantry which precede his arrival at Suprematism, when compared to his later treatment of the same subject, clearly show that a transformation has occurred to the peasant world. The works of the 1928–1932 period (cf. Also Illustrations 55–58) announce a darkening or dissolution of the peasants' facial characteristics. They still cultivate the fields in some way or another, but something unique, like the passage of an airplane high in the sky over their cultivated fields interrupts their ancient relationship to the soil. The new peasants ponder over the removal of their reliable tools of cultivation; the sky is diagonally tense and dynamic; the former fields are now challenged in ever larger extensions of a brightly coloured and geometrically mechanized agriculture. The peasants stand powerless amidst the greatest powers and they are puzzled by a "complex presentiment." Their image is split in halves and straight lines divide their whole being into opposing sides of light and gloom. This formidable transformation now introduces houses into the new geometrically purged horizon; white and red houses which are really suprematist cubes in our modern fields. And suddenly, a red cavalry dashes along our horizontal desert: an ensemble of 48 horsemen in 3 groups of 4x4.

Malevich emphasizes that "... the peasant will die out and will be swallowed up by town culture. He will lose his peasant qualities." He believes that the "man of the city stands on completely different ground as that of the

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6 MIV, p. 111.
One can see the trend in the seeking for a new man, for new paths.

Today the man has awaken who shouts for all the world to hear. All calls all humanity to unity. Our unity is essential for his being: not to obtain rights and liberty or to build an economic utilitarian life, but in order that, by the safeguarding of our bodily needs, our being may advance to the single unity and wholeness on the path of universal movement, as our main, and indeed, only goal. The unity of all humanity is essential, for a new single man of action is needed.  

This new man, replacing the former cultivation of the fields with the agro—industry and inhabiting the suprematist colour fields of the contemporary metropolis, stands on the edge of a unique event in humanity's historical existence: the complete dominion over the earth, together with the related thrust into outer space, coincide with the consummation of metaphysics in the thinking of Nietzsche. This consummation implies that nihilism, as the unwanted guest, stands at our doorstep and — in Malevich's words — "a new man of action is needed" in order to attend to this guest, or in terms of Nietzschean metaphysics, the overman becomes necessary.

The overman is this new essence of mankind which, by means of nihilism, negates — by going up and over — man as he has been heretofore. This nihilistic negation concerns, in a fundamental way, man's reason as his metaphysical determination, i.e., the animal rationale. The overman

MI, p. 46.  

MI, p. 167.
nihilistically negates the guidelines of representational thought concerning
beings as a whole. The coming into play of the overman is thus described by
Heidegger:

In the nihilistic inversion of the preeminence of representation to the preeminence of the will as will to power, the will first achieves absolute dominion in the essence of subjectivity. The will is no longer merely self—legislation for representational reason, which is active only as representing. The will is now pure self—legislation of itself: a command to achieve its essence, which is commanding as such, the pure powering of power. 9

The overman lives because the new mankind wills the Being of beings as will to power. It wills such Being because it is itself willed by that Being — the Being that is absolutely left to itself as mankind. 10

Our attention falls now on this very important work, i.e., Malevich’s self—portrait of 1933 (Illustration 23). We need to consider this work in relation to both: the 1915 painting entitled Suprematism: Self—Portrait in Two Dimensions (Illustration 59) and the context of illustrations 20 and 21. In these illustrations the portrait flanks the Black Square in such a way that the words written on the reverse of the former painting, i.e., "the artist and a Black Square," become all the more patent. The quasi—ludicrous pose and robe which are depicted by Malevich might bring to mind the exacerbated subjectivity of a self—canonizing artist. Deeper foundations, however, are being uncovered with this figurative work.


The figurative works play an essential role in the attainment of the full meaning of Suprematism in Malevich's funeral–performance. They constitute a "destruction" in the sense of the preempting of possible interpretations of Suprematism as geometrical abstractionism, interpretations which are often associated with the series of works formally related to the 1915 *Self–Portrait in Two Dimensions*. If the *Black Square* of 1913 as well as the following "abstract" paintings were to be understood as restricting themselves to a mere effacement and obliterating of the imitative representational art of the past, then we could accept the idea that the execution of the figurative works is indeed a "miserable business." The Stalinist repression, in this case, would have constituted their single raison d'être.

Nevertheless, a work such as the 1933 portrait establishes the *Black Square* as appropriated tradition (as the lower right–hand corner of the picture clearly shows) and thus effaces and obliterates an understanding of Suprematism in the narrower sense of "abstract art." A challenge -is then introduced to any linear understanding of a "progressive" and, for that matter, radical avant–garde in art. Malevich confirms, with the figurative works, the groundlessness of an artistic threshold. Abstract and figurative become interchangeable and interdependent in this empty in–between space. The suprematist square, as the basic experience of Malevich's art, is therefore, reinforced in its full meaning. The clarity of Malevich's words can be better appreciated:

... Suprematism is that end and beginning where sensations are uncovered, where art emerges 'as such', faceless.
II.3 The Suprematist Threshold and the Figurative Works

We need, therefore, to consolidate the notion of the threshold — as a lawless path or a free space of insecurity in art — which is accomplished with the introduction of the late figurative works into the full meaning of Suprematism.

When we consider Malevich's determination of the 1933 self—portrait, "the artist and a Black Square," as the work which hangs beside the centrally located *Black Square* in the context of the funeral—performance; and when we ponder the fact that, with the portrait, Malevich himself deliberately rendered Suprematism, in its narrower "abstract" sense, as historical, then our historical understanding of art and particularly the modern historiological determination of a progressive succession of artistic or architectural "styles" become a problem worth serious questioning. We can argue that the foundations of historiology need to be properly "deconstructed" (and, indeed, they were shaken by Malevich) in order that a thinking which attempts to understand history in a more essential way may unfold. The suprematist historical self—referentiality, in the form of the destruction of the notion of progress in art as well as in the gathering of partial, fragmentary meanings in the wholeness of the funeral—performance, introduces a hermeneutics of history as intrinsic to an authentic interpretation of *Dasein*, *i.e.*, history is seen as the fundamental expression of *Dasein's historicality*.

In writing about Cézanne, Malevich provides us with the following interpretation concerning the former artist's self—portrait: "His self—portrait is his best painterly work. He did not so much see the face of the portrait, as invest in its forms something painterly that he felt rather than saw. Whoever feels painting, sees the object to a lesser degree; and whoever sees the object
feels less what is painterly."\(^\text{12}\) If we consider the suprematist square as Malevich's basic *forming formula*, *i.e.*, as the groundlessness of art in the contrasting juxtaposition of the concealment of a white field and the presencing of a suprematist sensation in the black quadrangle, not only the preceding interpretation concerning Cézanne but also the following analysis of Léger's works can be seen as equally valid to Malevich himself as regards his late figurative paintings. He comments:

As we look at the "Lady with Bouquet," it may seem to us that Léger has betrayed his traditions, and turned way from non—objectivity towards the object ... But such a conclusion would be mistaken ... we see the same forming formula, the same contrast of elements of form, the same structure.\(^\text{13}\)

The contrast in Malevich's case, surpasses elements of pictorial form and becomes a *life contrast*. In a general way, we may conclude that his investigations of "new art," as he calls the several artistic movements since Impressionism, make patent that the occurrence of the figurative and particularly of self—portraits among the "new artists" has acquired a different meaning: "The new artists, in the majority of cases, are interested in portraits for the sake of painting as such, and do not adhere to aesthetic formation."\(^\text{14}\) Malevich sustains that the interests of the new artists "lie elsewhere in our world — in abstract forces and the condition of these forces; forces whose prime essence has continued to remain pure, and which still exists as such."\(^\text{15}\)

\(^\text{12}\) MI, p. 98.
\(^\text{13}\) MII, p. 68.
\(^\text{14}\) MII, p. 114.
\(^\text{15}\) MII, p. 105.
Malevich's late figurative works and especially his 1933 self-portrait, are relevant to Suprematism—as—Architecture in so far as they allow the artist to leave Suprematism, in the narrower sense of abstraction, in reverse order, i.e., an "evolution" repeats itself in reverse, once again breaking up the grounded suprematist form, and thus, destructively erecting Suprematism—as—Architecture on the basis of a threshold. The suprematist threshold is simultaneously deliberate, as an act, and unconscious, as the persistent and elemental attraction of the suprematist square.

Malevich, the modern "zero of form," transformed himself into a very ambiguous artistic figure. This ambiguity reflects Malevich's more immediate world and also, in a broader sense, the great ambiguity of our own contemporaneity. However, the most important issue here is our ability to address the uniqueness and decisiveness which stands behind this condition of uncertainty of meaning.

"Thus art puts a stop to any endeavour towards the progressing of things," Malevich strongly declares. He sustains that the creative process begins beyond the realm of knowledge as the securing of representational reason and, in the majority of cases, it undermines everything the artist takes for granted as well known and firmly secured. Accordingly, the need arises to avoid a historiographical approach to art and, in particular, to Suprematism, and to seek a more essential meaning for possible "obscurities." Malevich observes that:

... in this breaking up and violation of wholeness lay the hidden meaning which the naturalistic aim had concealed. The aim of this destruction was not primarily that of depicting the movement of things, but that of their destruction for the sake of the pure
essence of painting [my underlining]; that is, towards an approach to non-objective creation."

We, like a new planet on the blue dome of the sunken sun, we are the limit of an absolutely new world, and declare all things to be groundless."15

Our contemporary life needs only living and life-giving energy, it needs flying iron beams and coloured signals along the new path. It is essential that creative work be built on these foundations, burning the path behind it"9 [my underlining].

The breaking up of the wholeness of entities, contemporary life's self-overpowering, abyssal grounds and the search for new values, as pure essences, are terms which can be clearly related to Nietzsche's nihilism, properly understood as the devaluation of the highest values hitherto and the necessity of the positing of new values. The default of a firm ground is a fearsome reality we most certainly would fight very hard and resist. However, as Malevich himself declares, nihilism cannot be escaped by our mere denial or resistance to its presence. It becomes, in this way, all the more nihilistic: "such a servant forms by his actions a void space beside and about him; many fearing the void run even further into the depths of disturbance."

We reiterate that to the same extent that the 1913 Black Square devaluated -and obliterated the imitative-representational art of the past, the late figurative works, in their turn, obliterate every possibility of interpreting the suprematist square as progressive or "original" in the sense of the originality of the

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17 MI, p. 30. MI, p. 54.
18 MI, pp. 69-70.
19 MI, p. 80.
modernist avant—garde. The unquestioned belief in the originality and newness of the latter is actually overcome by means of the late figurative works. Newness wanes away in favour of authenticity in the Heideggerian sense of the term, and originality acquires a more essential connotation as the enduring source. The suprematist establishment of a threshold determines the unclear and insecure space between opposites, the space inherent in art's essence.

Malevich has clearly emphasized that his non—objective artistic experience should not be regarded as "abstract" in the sense of a parting away from "concrete" life. He writes that "... in reality, 'non—objective' arts cannot be abstract, as they are the most concrete of all, both by their very nature and in their expression of a particular weltempfang. On the contrary, from the point of view of an artistic weltempfang, every object is abstract and demands concrete artistic definition in a work of art" [my underlining].

It can be sustained that Malevich "collaged" the fragmentary meanings of the many suprematist periods in the full meaning of his funeral—performance as the ultimate clarification of the experience of the suprematist square and its historical significance. The fundamentally constructive intention tacitly contained in the figurative works only emerges within the context of that final whole. Malevich transformed himself into the nothing of form but went beyond and overcame the seemingly impossible: "you are in the nets of the horizon, like fish! We, suprematists, throw open the way to you. Hurry! For tomorrow you will not recognize us." These considerations are of particular importance at a time when Suprematism, in the sense of sleek geometrical abstractionism, becomes increasingly fashionable due, in part, to its "deconstructivist" appeal.

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\[1\] MI, p. 9.

\[22\] MI, p. 41.
II.4 An Evaluation of the Stalinist Demand for Social Realism in Art

Boris Groys, in his book *Staline: Oeuvre d'art totale*,\(^{23}\) introduces a critically fresher view of the questions of both social realism in the Russian art of the 1930s and of the relationship of the modern notion of avant-gardism to the ideology of the Stalinist era. A brief investigation of some of the basic points in the analysis of Groys may prove helpful in our attempt to demonstrate in which ways Malevich's "miserable affair" largely stretches the realm of the fullness of Suprematism—as—Architecture and also surpasses the conditions of the Stalinist demand for social realism.

Groys argues that not only Stalinist social realism in art but also the totalitarian arts of Nazi Germany and Fascist Italy find themselves in a position that is very characteristic of avant-garde movements, in other words, they equally experience, in their own way, a rejection from museums and an exclusion from the acknowledged and respected history of art, in view of their deviation from the established socio-cultural norms. The richness of meaning we might find by critically addressing the historical significance of this totalitarian possibility of art, especially with regards to its close connection to politics, does not, however, imply a simple absolution of the sins resulting from this singular marriage of art and political power.

On the contrary, our critical discourse should concentrate on the singularity of a historical context which allows such a marriage to take place. This singularity is all the more relevant when we are reminded of the still unheeded permanence of that same context, in the form of the economic—technological organization of the whole globe. The potential virulence of art in the mode of unforeseen *absolute alternatives* is continually overshadowed by the acclaimed innocuousness of techno—politics. Within the accepted logic of

contemporary "post modern" culture, this virulent potentiality is continually denied.

The question of the potential virulence of art needs also to be assessed in light of the widespread belief in the innocence of the avant–garde vis–à–vis the struggle for power. Thoughtful criticism should be fostered concerning the contemporary understanding of art which still insists on viewing a totalitarian and virulent experience of the artistic as nothing but a "classical" kitsch, a barbarianism and a simple decadent regression, as opposed to the avant–garde project of a complete organization of life and society according to the artistic parameters they may happen to determine. In respect to the latter, the Stalinist period, to a large extent, fulfilled the avant–gardist wishes and made them a concrete reality, even though their forms have not been the selected ones.

By juxtaposing seemingly incompatible tendencies such as totalitarian art and the art of the avant–garde, Groys raises the broader and deeper issue of the relationship art should bear to the politics of a period, and more significantly, to the modern politics of machine technology, an issue which is also addressed by Malevich in his "destructive" appropriation of Suprematism, as previously outlined.

Three fundamental points in that relationship require further discussion. In the first place, we need to consider the incantatory ritual on the part of "-avant–gardes" which believe their "artistic power" to be capable of a global and carefully detailed restructuring of human society by means of their "new" forms. In the second instance, we have the artistic tendencies which claim a certain aloofness and asceticism as a conscious resistance to the power thirst they recognize in the others but cannot see in themselves. Complete powerlessness is hardly identifiable as a reversed form of that thirst. Finally, we meet an artistic indifference to both power and powerlessness.
The artist's relation to political power, just as his relationship to the essence of machine technology seems to require a fourth possibility, i.e., the thinking through constituted by a reflection on the unified essences of art and technology. Heidegger tells us that a way is opened by questioning and that we:

... shall never experience our relationship to the essence of technology [and of art] so long as we merely conceive and push forward the technological, put up with it, or evade it. Everywhere we remain unfree and chained to technology, whether we passionately affirm or deny it. But we are delivered over to it in the worst possible way when we regard it as something neutral; for this conception of it, to which today we particularly like to do homage, makes us utterly blind to the essence of technology.  

We conclude our attempt to show the relevance of Malevich's late figurative works to the full meaning of Suprematism and to the Stalinist repression by emphasizing that these works necessarily belong, in their fragmentary nature, within the wholeness established in the context of the artist's funeral—performance, as the unity of an existential questioning. This interrogation, as Heidegger explains, necessarily dissolves all the horizons of fixed and secured modes of existence. We are told that this never ending dissolution of horizons does not create new grounds, but rather, leads us to older questions. Heidegger writes in his essay entitled "Being as the Void and as Abundance":

Being reveals itself to us in a variety of oppositions that cannot be coincidental, since even a mere listing of them points to their inner connection:

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Being is both utterly void and most abundant, most universal and most unique, most intelligible and most resistant to every concept, most in use and yet to come, most reliable and most abyssal, most forgotten and most remembering, most said and most reticent.

But are these, rightly considered, opposites in the essence of Being itself? Are they not opposites merely in the way we comport ourselves toward Being, in representing and understanding, in using and relying on, in retaining (forgetting) and saying? But even if they were opposites only in our relation to Being, we would still have attained what we were seeking: the determination of our relation to Being (not merely to beings). \(^{25}\)

III. The Architectons as Sculptural Places: Space and the Ontological Problem of the "Silent-Dynamic Erection of the New World"

III.1 From the Canvas Surface to Architecture as Such

"The Way into Volume," "The Architectural Models," "The Step into Volume and Space," etc., are some of the many different ways that the suprematist period corresponding to the appearance of the Architectons is designated. Whatever the choice of words, the diverse efforts to understand the meaning of the latter works agree on the fundamental fact that within the evolving suprematist experience there arose in Malevich a necessity to question the traditional planar existence of painting. That which sustained the latter relocated itself on such grounds that painting turned in the direction of an architectural spatial growth. This phenomenon is essential to Suprematism since its inception, and is equally shared by other 20th century artistic manifestations.

Even though the words volume and space are interchangeably used in relation to Suprematism in most of the available literature — and particularly so in connection with the Architectons — apparently without significant damage to their meaning, this interchangeability is not harmless to the essential "transitional" phenomenon they embody.

Malevich himself, as a matter of fact, frequently employed the word volume without distinguishing it from the word space in his writings concerning the Architectons and the architectural vocation of his suprematist experience. However, this shortcoming only reflects the widespread difficulty in separating volume, as the measurable space inherent in spatial entities, from a more essential insight into space as such. Volume, as Heidegger observes, is a modern
notion only as old as the technological natural sciences, which obliterates our access into the special and distinct character of space as such.

In spite of this hardly noticeable trap, a perseverant study of the artist's explanatory efforts and a careful consideration of his "more" explicitly architectural works allow us to ascertain the original meaning the artist attempted to articulate regardless of the linguistic shortcomings.

The originality of the meaning of the Architectons has a twofold character: in the first place, their meaning is inseparable from the basic experience of the 1913 Black Square; secondly, their nature, in view of the artist's funeral–performance, remains predominantly fragmentary, and thus, awaiting fulfillment. We can, therefore, assert that the twofold original meaning of the Architectons will require our concentration on the distinctness of the word space, as the carrier of the ontological problem of the "silent–dynamic erection of the New World," to use Malevich's expression.¹

It is, therefore, necessary to explain in which ways space constitutes, for Malevich's Architectons and for the entirety of Suprematism–as–Architecture, an ontological problem. This is particularly relevant to terms such as "New World building" and "silent–dynamic" in the aforementioned expression.

The decision to assemble the various periods of Suprematism under the description "Suprematism–as–Architecture" does not represent an idiosyncratic desire.-to-deter-mineSuprematism as the sine qua non for the "solution" of our architectural crisis and destitution. "Suprematism–as–Architecture" only reinforces the basic architectural vocation of Suprematism since its inception in the performance of the futurist opera victory over the Sun in December 1913, and seeks to emphasize the authenticity of an artist's interpretation of the possibilities of genuine building in our contemporary world.

¹ Cf. MI, pp. 172-73.
Two letters of May 1915 to Mikhail Matyushin, a close friend of Malevich and composer of the music for Victory over the Sun, describe Malevich's concern about the undeniable importance he associated with the stage design for the second act, scene 5, of that Zaum—futurist Opera (cf. Illustration 60). He writes:

I would be very grateful to you if you could put my one drawing for the curtain in the act where the victory has occurred .... This drawing will have great significance for painting. What had been done unconsciously is now giving extraordinary results.2

The curtain depicts a Black Square, the embryo of all potentials [one which] takes on a terrible strength as it develops. It is the father of the cube and the sphere [my underlining] and in painting its dissociations bear a wonderful culture.3

We need to emphasize once again that the supematist "embryo" only reveals its full potentiality twenty years later, in May 1935, when its wholeness is finally accomplished. The architectural vocation of this embryo, however, is already clearly outlined as early as December 1915, the occasion of the first public presentation of the Black Square, i.e., the 0.10 Last Futurist Exhibition in Petrograd. Not only the well known "iconoclastic" positioning of the square in the exhibition room (cf. Illustration 61), but also several paintings and drawings from the 1915—1916 period clearly indicate the architectural growth inherent in Suprematism (cf. Illustrations 62 to 65). The lithograph which is shown in Illustration 65 appears as a painting on the upper left—side wall in the "0.10" exhibition room. The artist I. Klyun, also a close friend of Malevich,


3 Ibid.
showed, at the same exhibition, works which were designated *Basic Principles of Sculpture*.

Two charts from the years 1915—1916 set out the suprematist embryo as "the father of the cube" and progenitor of a new aspect of architecture (cf. Illustrations 42—44). Malevich provides us with the following explanations in Illustration 43:

Table No. 1
Formula of Suprematism, 1913
In accordance with this formula it is essential to develop the volumetric aspect of Suprematism. The first form will be the cube.

No. 1

No. 2
Disintegration of the Cube or Formula [my underlining]

No. 3
The Extended Cube

No. 4
In this way we call obtain a new aspect of architecture, a pure aspect outside any practical aims, because architecture begins there where practical aims are absent. Architecture as such. K. Malevich.

The colour of these forms ought to be red and black. Suprematist colours:

- Red
- Black
- Main Green (emerald)
- White
- Blue (cobalt)
During the period extending between 1916 and 1918, a series of paintings and drawings appeared and were called *Aerial Suprematism*. Malevich was attempting to convey, by means of the suprematist square and the elements directly emerging from it, suprematist "sensations" and particularly the sensation of flight. Despite the fact that these works were later on reappraised by Malevich as fallacious (to the extent that they seemed to deviate from the essence of the experience of the square), they nevertheless clearly convey the same architectural thrust. Many of them are entitled "constructions" and present very relevant inscriptions (cf. Illustrations 66—70).

No matter how aesthetically appealing *Aerial Suprematism* turned out to be (and indeed, today, even more than in Malevich's time, it represents the predilection of a large number of "avant-garde" architects), it was superseded by a series of works classified as *White Suprematism*. Malevich, by means of the latter works, sought to retrieve, in a fundamental way, the original potential of the suprematist embryo. *White Suprematism*, epitomized by the famous 1917—18 *White Square on White*, is the artist's cultural "bracketing away"; a cleansing of Suprematism from the established culture of aerodynamics. This period placed Malevich in the closest immediacy with painting as a directly experienceable phenomenon suspended above the mediated concerns of culturally conditioned pictorial values.

"The Zero of Painting," as the period has been described, intends a more essential encounter with the constitution of painting and art. This unique attempt leads Malevich to a quasi—complete cessation of his painterly activity.

Starting in November 1919 and continuing throughout the 1920s, he increasingly concentrates his artistic concerns around the Architectons, teaching and his written works. It was therefore necessary to clear painting in the *White Square on White* so that a free space could be established, and the artist's fundamental insight would once again surface. This clearing of a free area is indeed characteristic of every step along the unfolding of Malevich's Suprematism.

We can, therefore, claim that the initial potentiality Malevich perceived in the supematist square required a movement towards a degree zero in painting which can be seen as the artist's extreme faithfulness to the former potentiality by means of an unconditional giving—up of secured accomplishments. Only this unconditional betrayal lets the authentic architecturality of Suprematism emerge without restraints. As Chapter II of this dissertation has already suggested, the radicality of *White Suprematism* and its subsequent growth into the Architectons is soon thoroughly questioned by Malevich himself in the form of his late figurative works, and particularly, his 1933 self—portrait. After that, only the ultimate meaning of Suprematism is left to be established in the form of Malevich’s funeral—performance.

**III.2 The Unovis Years as the Germination of the Architectural Vocation of Suprematism**

Before considering in greater detail the works of Malevich realized after his *White Suprematism, i.e.*, his Architectons and other relevant works extending from the early 1920s to the early 1930s, it is necessary to investigate his involvement with the activities of *Unovis* in Vitebsk from November 1919 to May 1922.

In spite of the fact that the works corresponding to that clearly architectural manifestation of Suprematism (in the form of the *Architectons*, 
Malevich was invited by Marc Chagall, a native of Vitebsk, to teach at the Popular Art School, an institute of higher education which Chagall founded and headed. Malevich arrived from Moscow, together with El Lissitsky, in November 1919 and his teaching activities led to the official creation, in February 1920 of the Unovis "Party" (a designation which reflects the revolutionary atmosphere of the times). Unovis (Utverditeli Novykh iskusstv — the Affirmers or Champions of the New Arts) is the clearest expression of an unlimited excitement on the part of Malevich and his students concerning the possibilities associated with the radical transformation of the utilitarian daily life by the architectural expression of Suprematism. This excitement borders on the prophetic—messianic: the "party" strongly believed in the emergence of absolutely new forms for contemporary life by means of the theoretical and practical developments in the new arts, i.e., Cubism, Futurism, and specifically, Suprematism (cf. Illustration 71).
"Art into Life" would become the cornerstone of Unovis building and Malevich's Zaum poetic phrase "U—El—El'—Ul—El—Te—Ka" would constitute a kind of party motto. The adopted name of El' Lissitsky is believed to have its source in this phrase. Not unlike Walter Gropius' ideal of establishing the Bauhaus as a creative commune inspired in the masonic lodges of the middle ages and attempting to unite all arts, Unovis equally sustained, in its daily
activities, certain traits which call to mind both religious fraternities or masonic lodges (cf. Illustration 72).

In an essay dated 15th December 1920 and written in Vitebsk, Malevich observes that "having established the specific plans of the suprematist system, I am entrusting the further development of what is already architectural Suprematism to young architects in the broad sense of the word, for only in Suprematism do I see an era of a new system for architecture."^{5}

The desire to transform every aspect of life in accordance with the original architectural vocation of the suprematist "embryo" (the square) brought not only architecture within the realm of activities of the Unovis Party (cf. for example, Lissitsky's *Prouns, Proekt Utverzhdenia Novogo*, the projects for the affirmation of the new, Illustrations 73 and 74) but also china, textile design, poetry, theatre, book design and typography, street decoration, in short, the most varied aspects of life (cf. Illustrations 75-79). Malevich writes in the same aforementioned essay:

In its historical development Suprematism has gone through three stages: black, coloured and white. All the periods passed under the conditional sign of planes, seeming to express the plans for future voluminous bodies, and in fact, at the present time, Suprematism is growing as a new architectural construction in space and time. Thus, Suprematism
is established in a link with the earth, but, as a result of its economic constructions, [it] changes the whole architecture of earthly things, in a broad sense, joining with the space of the monolithic masses moving in the planet system. 

\[\text{MI, pp. 125-126.}\]
The Architectons, we need to stress, should not be seen at all as originating from El Lissitsky's *Prouais*. The latter are Lissitisky's own adaptations of the suprematist language to his experience as an architect. Lissitsky's relationship to Malevich has remained one of deep admiration, but his involvement with Suprematism led him in quite different directions than those being pursued by Malevich. The work of Lissitsky became gradually closer to the constructivists, whereas the Architectons evolve in accordance with the proto—image constituted by the *Black Square*.

### III.3 The Architectons and Other Related Works

Malevich's *Architectons* are divided into two basic groups: lying or horizontal Architectons designated *Alpha* and *Beta*, and standing or vertical Architectons designated *Gota* (probably a contraction of *Gamma* and *Iota*) and *Zeta.* This broader division also includes works which, even though designated differently still fit the basic horizontal—vertical classification. Thus, *Suprematist Ornaments* and *Themes for Monuments* are, most frequently, vertical Architectons, whereas *Planits* are indeed horizontal Architectons. The important *Suprematist Column* of 1928 (also called *Lukos*), which was used in Malevich's funeral—performance, is a vertical Architecton. Standing apart from this basic classification—however—are-drawings- for socialist towns also—simply called "airfields on earth."

In his 1928 essay entitled "Painting and the Problem of Architecture," Malevich describes *Suprematist Architectonics* as "architectural formulae with

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Malevich does not provide a reason for the choice of Greek letters. His great admiration for thé art of ancient Greece is usually seen as a motivating factor. In *MII*, page 17, he declares that "The collective of new architecture consists of a large number of people [i.e., young architects and 'new' artists]. This latter fact makes me think that our architectural period has an immediate link with antique architecture, in its method and even in its attitude to life."
the aid of which one can give form to architectural structures. As illustrations 42 and 43 remind us, these "formulae" are obtained by the elongation and disintegration of the basic spatial formula of Suprematism, i.e., the cube–tomb of Illustrations 7 to 9. This spatial formula, in its turn, is "grounded" in the primary formula of Suprematism: the 1913 square. The pictorial "struggles" of the square as depicted in Illustrations 62 to 70, are nothing more than the artist's initial efforts to bring that primary formula–experience into its fundamentally architectural condition. This condition, according to Malevich, is an intrinsic requirement of the contemporary "suprematist order" as the elaboration of a new architectural system outside formalist and functional goals, or in Malevich's own words, the elaboration of "architecture as such." The Architectons, therefore, should be considered as embodying places in conformity with that "suprematist order". This architectural embodiment of places is established in the white abyssal ground of the cube and the square.

Very often a parallel to the vertical Architectons is drawn in relation to the formal structure of the modern American cityscape with its towering skyscrapers. Some even venture the claim that the American metropolis is carrying out Malevich's dream of seeing the world as suprematist. We can hold that claim as correct, but an essential event is still missing in the urban milieu: if the Architectons (horizontal or vertical) are to be associated with the modern city, Malevich's photographs tell us that our -cities have unexpectedly fallen white and silent. The walls of our towering buildings are made blind and the powerful dynamism is instantly frozen by a bright "metallic light." As a matter of fact, the suprematist city, in many was, resembles much more a white sacrificial Locus, even though one which can reach into the higher strata of the earth's atmosphere.

* MII, p. 16.
The notions of 'dynamism' and "white" have a broad and important meaning in Malevich's thinking. The artist certainly betrays his past involvement with Futurism and its "dinamismo universale." The suprematist dynamism, however, attempts to address more essential grounds than the futurist enthusiasm with the advent of machine technology. Malevich agrees that "our epoch is the dynamic epoch, the epoch of speed." Nevertheless, he ponders the fact that "one talks less and less of arts, more and more of dynamics, technology; as if the artistic beginning exists no more, as if we have travelled far from the time and place where art was endowed with enormous significance.\(^9\)

According to Malevich's understanding, the suprematist white is not restricted to a colour phenomenon and is not the simple result of colour oscillation. White "points to my [Malevich's] transformation in time. My imagining of colour stops being colourful, it merges into one colour — white."\(^1\)

Even though the tone of Malevich's writings concerning the modern city is one of anxious excitement, we should not misinterpret what is really a critical investigation as being simply an unconditional endorsement. A detailed analysis of the meaning associated with the *Architectons*, the *planits* and the projects for "socialist towns" makes clear that those architectural works are indeed of little "profit" for the unrestrained momentum of the construction industry or for the --qu-ick-solution-of-the-dwelling crises in the sprawling urban centres. In the latter sense he is more readily seen as a formalist and "nihilistic" avant-garde artist. Malevich addresses the city in the following manner (cf. also Illustrations 80–82 for his rendering of "socialist towns"):

\(^{10}\) Ibid.

\(^{11}\) MIV, p. 34.
... the town is that final hub of the plane on which all our perfection must be sketched [my underlining]. By town I understand a centre, directing people. It can be a house or a zeppelin [our modern houses are actually more than an entire city in themselves; communication technology, incorporates the entire world in our domestic environment] ... It is true that the town is the highest point of man's development, the town is that lighthouse which points the way towards itself, and directs the powers that have arrived ... 'the being' of man travels towards this untiringly and the future town is already built according to the plan not by means of dissipated little plots taken into possession by every but in general economic perfection. The town will submit to the slide rule of economics and its form will come out of the common necessity to express the order of 'the being' in which every 'I' will already find its flat to be prepared ... When the order of the town has been established according to the economic development of its plan, then we will reach a clear expression of our consciousness in the construction of our nature as a human being. Consequently our 'being' untiringly fights with separate 'I's, clipping them all in accordance with the slide rule of its economic expression; it wishes to arrive at the straight line, the eternal irreversible path of its existence [my underlining]. It will dissect its body and sort it out into elements for a new perfection."

... the town, like a spider, weaves a web of telegraph lines about the provinces and builds railways along them, below on the ground and up above in the air. It drags the provinces along the railways, just as a spider drags a fly into its centre, reworking the consciousness in its centrifuge, it turns its flabbiness into an energy and returns back as tin, glass, electric current.¹³

MIV, pp. 60-61.

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¹³ MIII, p. 188.
The energetic dynamism of the metropolis will overcome, in Malevich's perception, every political or economic "idiosyncrasies which might get in the way of this powerful thrust. "Since the globe's energy is racing towards a single centre, all economic pretences should also strive towards a policy of unity," he adds.\textsuperscript{14} We are, however, reminded that the ultimate meaning of all this hurly—burly cannot be reached when people insist on seeing only a "culture of domestic comfort." That ultimate meaning leads us back to the very foundations of creation in art and, without denying our technological existence, overcomes the objectified condition of art by means of new non—objective signs. In Malevich's words: "the meaning of every organism in utilitarian technology ... is seeking the opportunity to penetrate the realm we see on the suprematist canvas.\textsuperscript{15} He continues:

\textit{... What in fact is the canvas? What do we see represented on it? Analyzing the canvas we see primarily a window through which we discover life [my underlining] ... the most important in Suprematism — its double basis — are the energies of black and white serving to reveal the forms of action."}\textsuperscript{16}

The double basis of Suprematism relates, therefore, to the phenomenon of a complete vanishing of colour in the "central section of labour and science," as he describes the city. The previously discussed extension of the city into the provinces and villages is also said to create a single nucleus of concentration of energy to such a degree that there follows the emergence of a "field of

\textsuperscript{14} MI, p. 116.

\textsuperscript{15} MI, pp. 124-25.

Ibid.
Hercules," i.e., the nucleus' power content exceeds man's limit. This overflowing of tension beyond the limits of human capacity and control destroys man's image as hitherto sustained. Art, as well as colour, are then dispassionately regarded and the scales of black and white take the place of honour. Only this state of affairs attains the highest level in the contemporary techno—industrial thrust.

In the early 1920s Malevich produced a series of drawings of his Planits for Earth Dwellers, also called The Pilot's House or Pilot's Planit. According to the inscriptions found in some of the drawings, the planits are objects which can float in space and may be used by man — particularly by the pilot—man — for his specific purposes, even though in themselves the planits are built without particular aims.

These dynamic suprmatist objects or constructions should not be interpreted as projects to be realized in the near or distant future in relation to Malevich's time. They are rather concrete constructions in the sense of a clear presentation of a dwelling condition, i.e., the peculiar condition in which the "earthing" find themselves today. This concreteness is made even clearer when the planits are described as being reached from every side, and as minuscule as an atom (cf. Illustrations 83-88).

"Henceforth may every creation create the form of what is passing. Let tall steeples and flying houses prepare for flight," Malevich exclaims.' The following passages may shed additional light on the meaning of the suprmatist planits:

Aerial planits will point to a new plan for towns and a new form for the habitats of earth dwellers; in them will be heard the sonorous sounds of the music of the future, these are the new voices and the new

17 MI, p. 64.
choir of the planits (aeroplanes). In accordance with them everything must be planned and linked, the habitat of the earth dwellers must be linked with its movement, in air as on the ground, according to one plan. This is why new art, and in particular Suprematism, now suggests to engineers, technicians, architects, its first non—objective suprematist planits as a form of combined working and seeks an ally in the face of today, to fight the old form of architecture of ancient constructions ... for it does not correspond to the forms of the time, to our present—day plastic construction of air and earth.\textsuperscript{18}

The air space in which the dynamo—planits exist is the basis on which one will have to plan dynamically the earth's structures. This dynamo—planning can be of suprematist spatial or plane structure, which can be divided into dynamic Suprematism and non-objective architectural statics according to the additional element of the square.\textsuperscript{19}

If the group of Architectons is generally perceived as holding itself aloof from stylistic applications in the utilitarian world of the citizens, due, in part, to its hermetic sculpture—like impenetrability and silent white aura, the design for chinaware, textiles, stage sets, etc., as shown in Illustrations 75 to 79, are on the contrary,\textemdash often seen as a happy proof of the friendly rapport of Suprematism with domestic life. The situation, however, stands in a different light in Malevich's understanding. He explains that the annihilation of the object as a painterly framework, as a means to a certain representational end, allows the emergence of a creative system which removes the artist from a condition of lostness in the midst of compositional vicious circles, from objects back to objects. We are told that an artist will continually find himself confined to the

\textsuperscript{18} MIII, p. 211.

\textsuperscript{19} MIII, p. 188.
walls of aestheticism as long as he insists on constructing his works according to a willful interrelation of forms and colours, even if the latter are chosen from the vocabulary of Suprematism. To construct a work of art according to a new creative system such as Suprematism signifies the construction of the work by means of a thoughtful penetration into the thing proper, a teapot for example.\textsuperscript{20}

The term Architecton is indeed a very appropriate choice for works which are more readily regarded as "abstract"geometric sculptures. This fact, on the one hand, asks the question of the still—prevalent distinction between the merely sculptural—artistic and the "truly" architectural (in the sense of that which safeguards mankind by providing inhabitability). On the other hand, the blurring of boundaries which takes place in the Architectons presents a more fundamental and disturbing question: considering that the safeguarding of humans is essentially accomplished in the space of architectural building, how are we to approach an architecture where space is undifferentiated from the artistic—sculptural space? Furthermore, what sheltering is provided by an architecture whose single instance of openness to human dwelling is constituted by the dead body of an artist in the coffin—Architecton?

What is implied by Malevich's emphatic refusal of the conventional functioning of architecture in this "unusual" space of art—architecture? Malevich did not see the "dis—functionality" of his Architectons as a mere denial of the _daily necessary function_ s of life. He was rather calling our attention to the fact that art is the highest function of life. Art first needs to establish some mode of Dwelling (in the Heideggerian sense of the way mankind stands within the Fourfold of Earth, Sky, Divinities and Mortals) before any other functions of life may gain their authentic expression. Malevich explains that the formation for certain functions of life is simply the fitting of the latter into an order

\textsuperscript{20} Cf, MI, p. 121.
accomplished by art.\textsuperscript{21} Heidegger also speaks of the work of art as the granting of a truth which necessarily comes into the world to pass. In this respect art can, therefore, be seen as the "highest" function of life and no other function than an artistic function seeks fulfillment in Malevich’s Architectons.

The formal affinity of the Architectons with the emergent modernist architecture of the beginning of the twentieth century, and particularly with the "de Stijl" architecture of Theo van Doesburg, only demonstrates, according to Malevich, the "contamination" of contemporary architecture by the suprematist forming element. "By this," Malevich reiterates, "I do not mean to say that new architecture of the West is suprematist, but I can say that new Western architecture stands on the road to suprematist Architectonics"\textsuperscript{22} [my underlining]. We are told that what ought to be in the new architecture is revealed in the contrasting "alpha" (horizontal) and "gota" (vertical) of the suprematist Architectons (cf. Illustrations 89 to 146).

What exactly is revealed in the horizontal—vertical contrast directly concerns our very understanding and apprehension of that which is implied by the word space. The Architectons equally address our modern understanding of the purposiveness of the architectural vis—à—vis the "aimlessness" of the artistic—Architectonic. The twofold concern in the Architectons envisions, however, one single fundamental experience: the transition from the metaphysical space of representational reason in the subjectivity of the modern human subject to the existential spatiality of Dasein. This fundamental transition may account for much of the avant—garde’s concern with originality and radical newness.

\textsuperscript{21} Cf. MII, p. 13.

\textsuperscript{22} MII, p. 16.
III.4 From the Metaphysical Space of Representational Reason to the Existential Spatiality of Dasein

The fundamental direction of Western metaphysical thinking in the determination of the origin of reason, from Plato and Aristotle to Kant and even Nietzsche (despite his efforts to overcome metaphysics), is found in the characterization of reason as the securing of the permanence of beings, i.e., the possibility of positing a sameness, a selfsame. The rational encounter with entities, in the sense of the objectivity facing the self—certain subject, is thus a categorizing encounter in so far as entities are rationally determined in their constitution, proper relation, causality or effect, size, etc.

The metaphysics of Immanuel Kant, with his doctrine of the transcendental imagination, is the first instance of an explicit consideration of the essence of reason as creative and poetizing in the previous meaning of the securing of a permanent horizon of entities.

Nietzschean metaphysics, on the other hand, emphasizes the Kantian determination of the essence of reason. Rather than overcoming the metaphysical determination of logical—rational knowledge, Nietzsche reiterates its creative—categorizing character in the form of poetization, i.e., the schematization of chaos stemming from a perspectival—horizontal securing of permanence as a condition of life. Heidegger interprets the Nietzschean characterization in the following terms:

The sensuous crowds and overwhelms us as rational living beings, as those beings who have always already been intent on making things identical without expressly carrying out such an intention. For only what is identical offers the guarantee of the same; only the same secures constancy, while making constant effects the securing of permanence. Accordingly, even the sensations themselves that
constitute the initially pressing "tumult" are a fictionalized [a categorized] manifold. The categories of reason are horizons of poetizing [schematization] and such poetizing first clears for what is encountered that free place from which and upon which it can appear as something constant, as an object. 

The relevance of these considerations of the metaphysical essence of representational reason to the suprematist works of Malevich, and to the Architectons in particular is found in a comparison of those considerations with the suprematist basic notions of non—objectivity and purposelessness. Malevich's close relationship to the transrationality of Zaunt poetry is also equally relevant.

The fact that the Architectons seek the as suchness of architecture and, in this connection, are rendered "purposeless," i.e., outside the conventional form—function dialectics, also springs from the necessity to overcome the metaphysical essence of reason. Nietzsche, in his own effort to overcome that metaphysical determination, has emphasized — and this constitutes his unique contribution — that purpose or finality, as a basic category of reason, is not a cause but an effect. In this Nietzschean sense, therefore, the purpose of sheltering in architecture, which causes the furnishing of a roof, is rather an effect, not a cause. Heidegger gives the following explanations:

What he [Nietzsche] primarily wants to emphasize is this: the on—account—of—which and the for—this—reason that are represented in advance originate as such, that is, as what has been fixed in advance from the poetizing character of reason, from its being intent on something constant. Thus they are produced by reason and for such reason are an effect. As a category, finality is something poetized and thus

effected (an effect). Yet what is thus poetized, the category "purpose" has the horizontal characteristic that it gives directives for the production of something else. Hence, it causes the effecting of something else. Precisely because finality as a kind of cause is a category, it is an "effect" in the sense of a poetized schema.24

The space of metaphysical reason is essentially the space of objectivity. The modern subjectivity of the human subject is synonymous with a self—certain representation of the being of the entities the subject encounters. Because this representation is grounded on itself, objectivity places itself within the range of a securing which is fundamentally a widespread calculable certainty.

If purposefulness is thus clarified as a category of schematizing reason, effect rather than cause, and if the essence of reason, as subjectivity, is established in the form of a self—certain representing of beings as objectivity, something unlike the metaphysical determination has taken place in Malevich's understanding of a non—objective, non—purposive architecture.

In the light of the previous considerations we see that our unquestioned trust in the truth of the three—dimensionality of Euclidean space is also shaken. In the same way, we can claim that the truth of Euclidean space, the security of a spatial foothold, is a conditioned truth, a schematized horizon of reason in its collision with overflowing chaos. The suprematist non—objective "blurring" snatches the fixedness of entities away into their inherent "spatial chaos." This, in turn, introduces the horizon of impermanence and insecurity of entities, i.e, a distance between reason and things. Impermanence and insecurity finally "displace" the rational subject, i.e, introduce absence and groundlessness. Being over against the nothing of absence is constitutive for the spatiality of Dasein. The contrast presence—absence is something Malevich clearly experienced.
It is important that we reiterate the basic process delineated in Illustrations 42 and 43: the suprematist square as the basic "formula" engenders the extending of Suprematism into space by means of another "formula": the cube. The latter formula needs to go through disintegration and elongation, increase and diminution in order that the "as suchness" of an aimless architecture may be accomplished. The Architectons, therefore, sought to register this process as a spatial throwing of the cube—dice, "le dé à jouer."

"The suprematist mirror," a.1923 manifesto, in many ways addresses the issue of the trans—rationality of the movement which goes from the metaphysical space of representational reason to the existential spatiality of Dasein:

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<th>A.1</th>
<th>God</th>
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<tr>
<td>The Soul</td>
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<tr>
<td>The Spirit</td>
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<td>Life</td>
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<td>The World as Human Distinctions</td>
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<td>Space</td>
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1. Science and art have no boundaries because what is comprehended infinitely is innumerable and infinity and innumerability are equal to nothing.
2. If the world's creations are God's paths and if 'his ways are inscrutable,' then both he and his path are equal to nothing.

3. If the world is the creation of science, knowledge and labour, and if their creation is infinite, then it is equal to nothing.

4. If religion has comprehended God, it has comprehended nothing.

5. If science has comprehended nature, it has comprehended nothing.

6. If art has comprehended harmony, rhythm and beauty, it has comprehended nothing.

7. If anyone has comprehended the absolute, he has comprehended nothing.

8. There is no existence either within or outside me. Nothing can change anything, since nothing exists that could change or be changed [my underlining].

A.2

The essences of distinctions.
The world as non-objectivity.25

It is, therefore, evident that Malevich places architecture outside all utilitarianism and all conditioning of politics, economy, religion, etc. Non—objective architecture inhabits the uncomfortable space where the boundaries of painting, sculpture and architecture are unclear. This architecture builds, to use Malevich's expression, our spatial liberation into the white abyssal ground and

25 MI, pp. 224-25.
thus requires a departure towards essences and pure foundations as the task of our epoch. These pure foundations, as our "world law," are the *modern forms* we have to build. Malevich declares that they are "the ground and the place on which I will build: rest and time." He continues:

> In the suprematist construction of forms in time a great tension of sound waves is achieved.

> The construction itself is highly complex, it is built not for the sake of erection, but in order to transmit the graph which is drawn according to the changes of my inner oscillations.

Malevich explains that life may and does fall into an artistic, religious, or civic *form* but all these "cultures" only aim towards the *highest formation* which is the building of Architecture—as—art. This building is fundamentally "a—logical," outside the grip of reason and waking consciousness. It is *the completion* where reason ceases its activity; and this is only the last height of rational and subconscious activity, after which one enters into no—objectivity. Architecture—as—art, as opposed to "civic building," is the highest level of development of the "house as rest." At this point it should become clearer why Malevich wants to see that every "Leninist workman" will have a cube in his domestic environment. He concludes:

> Only with the appearance of the constructive non—objective arts does the non—progressive, temporal,

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26 MIV, p. 35.

27 Ibid.

28 MIII, pp. 313-14.

29 MIII, p. 292.
therefore real artistic culture of the new arts begin, i.e., non-objective, beyond values, for in it there is no aim to perfect phenomena, just as one cannot say that a stone has trodden a progressive path of perfection in nature, for in it there is no 'in the name of something.' It is the perfection of the stone which has to be formed.30

The widespread misunderstanding which sees Russian Constructivism as working out the same questions of Suprematism should be abolished. Malevich himself clearly emphasizes that Constructivism by no means exhausts the work on new architecture. According to him, Suprematism seeks the development of non-objective artistic Architectonics, revealing the conditions of a new epoch. This new epoch and its new forms, Malevich acknowledges, will simply constitute the bases of the art yet to come with vibrant power or with a still more silent powerlessness.

Another important point remains to be considered in relation to the spatial transition taking place in Malevich's Architectons. The point concerns architectural representation and, more specifically, representational perspective. In the first place, we need to observe that a "shift" in the understanding of space already happens in Cubism. However, only with the suprematist square of 1913 this understanding is stretched into the limits of a completely non-perspectival horizon, literally, a darkening of the perspectival. How does Malevich perceive the relationship of "architecture as such" to the conventional architectural representation, especially with regards to the historical conditions which move from Daniele Barbaro to Andrea Pozzo, and finally, to our contemporary "computer aided design"?

In accordance with Malevich's analysis of the new arts, perspectival representation is removed with Paul Cézanne, so that the plane surface can act
as the place for the revelation of sensations of a painterly and, then, spatial character (cubist collage, for example). He argues that the painterly body of the new arts of Cubism, Futurism and Suprematism reveals the same kind of spatial depth as that in which all entities are lying.

Comparing what he designates a "perspectival triangular path" with a "quadrangular" one, first emerging in Cubism, he writes: "Thus was created the perspective whose beams converged in one point, making a cuneiform path: this was how the entire world was viewed." He continues:

And when art felt the need to expand the growth of its body, it was necessary to destroy the cuneiform–perspective catacomb, we began to regard the world differently and discovered its many–sided movement, and were thus faced with the problem of how to convey it fully: hence arose systems and laws contemporary to our comprehension ... but seeing the world does not mean seeing it with the eyes — it can also be seen with knowledge and with one’s whole being ... Therefore, non–objective arts no longer deal with a representation of phenomena, particularly as perspectival representation, but rather with a communication of definite sensations existing in the phenomenal world. The new-"quadrangular" path envisions the three–dimensionality of Euclidean space as a conditioned truth of categorizing reason and introduces the decisive perception of the spatiality of Dasein. The perspective of Suprematism is the depth of the abyss of Being.
III.5 The Architectons and The Non—Objectivity, and Non—Representability of the Spatiality of Dasein

The space of Dasein, its *spatiality*, requires a more detailed analysis. In Section III, division one of "Being and Time", Heidegger declares that spatiality belongs to Dasein as Being—in—the—world, in so far as it is *in*. As opposed to the other entities which Dasein encounters within the world as being present—at—hand, Dasein is rather "in" the world. The very fact that entities can be encountered in an environment which is "spatial" springs from the intrinsic spatiality of Dasein itself.

Dasein is "spatial" because, as being—in—the—world, it deals with entities within—the—world in a familiar and concernful way. We cannot, therefore, characterize Dasein's spatiality as being present—at—hand or ready—to—hand in a certain position in the "world space." Heidegger characterizes the spatiality of Dasein with two basic terms: "Disseverance" (*Ent—fernung*) and "directionality" (*Ausrichtung*).

Dasein is disseverant because of the distance between entities (which are present—at—hand and ready—to—hand) and itself. Heidegger insists that disseverant Dasein can never cross the remoteness of the entities it encounters within the world. He tells us that "seeing and hearing are distance—senses not because they are far—reaching, but because it is in them that Dasein as disseverant mainly dwells." 33

The directionality which characterizes the spatiality of Dasein is co—determined by the fundamental "towards" which defines Being—in—the—World. Our orientation to right or left, above or below, horizontality or verticality, are all grounded on the basic directionality of Dasein. Space, therefore, is available only as the disclosure of the being-in—the—world that constitutes Dasein.

33 Heidegger, M. *Being and Time*, op. cit., p. 141.
Heidegger concludes that "space is not to be found in the subject, nor does the subject observe the world 'as if' that world were in a space; but the 'subject' (Dasein), if well understood ontologically, is spatial."\(^{34}\)

We have characterized the Architectons as *sculptural places* and related them to space in the form of an existential—ontological building of the world. This characterization has already gained some clarity along our previous explanatory efforts. The choice of the word "places" wants to upset the voluminous rendering of the Russian avant—garde and of Malevich’s works, in particular, as "u—topic," even though greatly utopic. It is necessary to insist on the absolute concreteness of works as the Architectons. They are *places* where the creation of forms begins as the "amalgamation of reality and reflection," to use Malevich’s words.\(^{35}\)

"Sculptural" is equally an appropriate term for the characterization of the *Architectons* in so far as the establishment of a boundary between the space of art and that of architecture comes to the fore as deserving a more essential questioning. In the "sculptural places," which the Architectons embody, *space* is, therefore, introduced as a matter of perplexity and as an ontological problem in need of special formulation. The "formulas" available in Suprematism, as we have seen, are intrinsically dependent on the zero of form of the suprematist square. The Architectons, as places, should not, however, be seen as a masterly construction of -forms "ex—nihilo." "Ex—nihilo nihil fit" and we are given everything: "new art, on the whole, views only the architecture of a construction which is born from the stillness of our consciousness and feeling."\(^{36}\)

Op. cit., p. 146. MIII,

pp. 24—25. MIII, p.222

—23.
Malevich brings the confrontation of art to the constructiveness of non-objectivity. Architecture can only be suprematist as a static—dynamic non-objective elan. We add the following explanations:

... the struggle for his essence [man's], for existence, is at the same time a struggle for non-essence. And he will also have a non-objective (aimless) view of being. Non-aim, non-objectivity of architecture is an action in which there is neither aim nor practical designations, as a non-objective, non-essential tranquility which has never mastered or formed anything.  

The white square is a purely economic movement of the form which embodies the whole new white world building. It also evokes the establishment of world building as "pure action," as self—knowledge in a purely utilitarian perfection of "all—man" [sic].  

... what we need is the silent—dynamic erection of the new world and this is what we must study in our new workshops for natural discoveries. How we must study and what we must stand on is an important question, for your deed depends upon the stand you take. What is comprehended is also realized ...  

... and will not all the meaning of this movement of people towards this colourless non-objective world be reached, will a new classical tranquility not dawn?  

By this disclosure of new painterly laws, and by the formulating in space of their relationship to our contemporaneity we create a new building, i.e., that

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MIII, p. 225.

37 MI, pp. 126-27.

38 MI, pp. 172-73.

40 MIII, pp. 1.11-12.
We also need to trace an additional parallel to Malevich's interpretation of the constructiveness and spatiality of Suprematism in Heidegger's reading of the special character of space in the context of the essay *Art and Space* of 1969. Besides the previous determination of the spatiality of Dasein, Heidegger insists that what space in itself is remains a puzzling and difficult question which is barely asked and even less answered.

In any case, the interplay of art and space, and therefore, the special character of space remains concealed in so far as the objectivity of the physical—technological space remains as the a priori orientation in every attempt to determine that special character. This stubborn objectivity, in Heidegger's understanding, is simply the correlate of the subjectivity of the modern ego, a condition which, as we tend to forget, is foreign to epochs which preceded modern European times.

The authentic character of space holds sway in the realm which is opened by the work of art itself. Heidegger, however, draws our attention to the fact that modern art, specially when it understands itself as directly dealing with space, may also lead into an utter control of space in the same way as the technological sciences.

In a typical manner, he follows the path of language in order to "deconstructively" retrieve essential grounds. He declares that the word space (Räumen) speaks of a clearing—away, the establishing of an openness for the settling and dwelling of man. He writes:

... clearing—away is the release of places towards which the fate of dwelling man turns in the preserve of

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41 MIII, p. 197.
the home or in the brokenness of homelessness or in complete indifference to the two ... clearing—away brings forth locality preparing for dwelling.\footnote{42}

The interplay of art and space is thus determined by the twofold experience of \textit{place} and \textit{region}. \textit{Place} opens a region because it gathers things in their being toward each other. Things themselves are indeed places and do not simply belong to a place. Heidegger thinks of the \textit{region} which a place opens in a way similar to his description of the world as 'that—which—worlds.' A region opened in a place "regions."

Space, as the embodiment of places in the work of art, is inseparable from \textit{emptiness}. \textit{Emptiness}, however, \textit{is not simply a void nothing in the sense of a deficiency in what has been embodied}. Heidegger insists that truth, as the unconcealment of Being, does not \textit{necessarily} depend on embodiment. "Emptiness plays in the manner of a seeking—projecting instituting of places," he concludes.\footnote{42}

IV. From Cubism and Futurism to Suprematism: A Linguistic Affair
and the Beginnings of Suprematism

IV.1 Looking Behind an Impetuous Manifesto

*From Cubism and Futurism to Suprematism — the New Realism in Painting* is the title of an important manifesto at the occasion of the *0.10 Last Futurist Exhibition*. The exclamatory and enthusiastic character of the publication conveys the atmosphere surrounding Malevich's first public presentation of "the face of the new art," i.e., of the square as "living, royal infant." Many of the essay's declarations will be reformulated along the infant's development, as in the figurative period. The apparent contradictions, as we have insisted throughout this dissertation do not constitute a mere denial of what was previously determined, but are rather the artist's efforts in trying to fully understand the meaning of the suprematist experience of the square.

By looking at what stands behind the succession of Cubism—Futurism—Suprematism, i.e., Malevich's affair with futurist *Zaum* poetry, this chapter will attempt to clarify the relationship of that "End—and—Beginning," which the square constitutes, to language. The affair is epitomized by the 1913 futurist --opera *Victor_y_over___the Sun* which marks the birthplace of Suprematism. The overcast atmosphere of that place is conditioned by the music of Mikhail Matyushin, the poetry of Alexei Kruchenykh and the alogical Cubo—Futurism of Malevich.

The investigation of the linguistic affair which stands behind Suprematism, especially, with regards to the latter's determination of the transition from the representational space of categorizing reason to the non—

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1 Cf. MI, p. 38.
objectivity of the spatiality of *Dasein*, proves particularly relevant in so far as language bears a fundamental relation to that basic Heideggerian notion.

Behind *From Cubism and Futurism to Suprematism*, there is also the beginning of Malevich's necessity to establish in writing what he had accomplished with the experience of the square, i.e., non—objectivity proper. The latter notion, as the attainment of "new relationships with nature and things" and as the surpassing of rationality by a transformation of the self into a zero—form, is thus closely related to the transrationality of the futurist *Zaum* poetry.

Nevertheless, granted that a linguistic affair leads Malevich to the doorstep of non—objectivity, the silence and desert—like nature of the square remains a problematic "contradiction." We may claim, however, that the relationship of language itself to the spatiality of Dasein is such that a very special kind of stillness and silence are required so that language, rather than being spoken, *speaks*.

### IV.2 The Traits of the Affair

Even though Malevich's relationship to the Russian futurist literary movement achieved its climax in the previously mentioned opera *Victory Over the Sun*, the less ambitious joint ventures which preceded the opera, along with the individual accomplishments of the futurist poets themselves may also provide additional clarity to Malevich's arrival at Suprematism. Of particular relevance, in that respect, are some of the works by Victor Khlebnikov and Alexei Kruchenykh.

The special nature of the linguistic affair lies also in the fact that the close involvement of painters and poets was not only expressed by the former's

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2 MI, p. 27.
borrowings from poetry, but also, by the poets' application to their own works of the achievements in painting. Thus, futurist poets would equally participate in the public discussions and polemics of painters, make and break alliances with them and, in the case of several poets, consider themselves painters as well.

In the light of the special character of the linguistic affair we may come to better understand Malevich's literary style, his lack of respect for grammar and also his free alteration of the dates of works, together with the insertion of old themes in new contexts. These procedures are very typical of Khlebnikov's, and particularly, of Kruchenykh's style.

Among the basic characteristics of Khlebnikov's poetic works, we can enumerate: a fragmentary structure, an attraction to primeval freshness and neologisms which clearly express an interest in infantile language. This latter characteristic is also shared by the works of many futurist poets, and especially by Elena Guro, Mikhail Matyushin's wife.

Khlebnikov sustained the idea that consonants are pregnant with meaning and that they, for that reason, open a way to a proto—language. Language was therefore perceived by him as a bearer of inherent and hidden wisdom that had thus to be uncovered by means of the articulation of that proto—language he later designated as Zaum. The term Zaum, indicating the transrational language, was shared by Kruchenykh; they, however, attributed to it slightly different meanings.

Mayakovsky, on the other hand, never really entered the area of Zaum poetry or transrational language. He, nevertheless, supported the creation of words as a form of attaining the language of the "people to come." Mayakovsky's favourite poetic activity was the extolling of the dynamism and nervousness of the metropolis, a theme which is also frequent in the works of Elena Guro.
The futurist poets were, thus, in search of that independent life of the word, the word as such, because that life, they believed, would allow man to speak the language of poetry directly. Khlebnikov named the people with this unique capacity *budetyane*, i.e., "men of the future," a term which became synonymous with the futurist poets themselves. Therefore, we can see the Zaum awakening of dormant meanings in words (by means of neologisms, the emphasis on the fragments or parts of words and the baring of their primitive freshness), as a parallel effort to the Heideggerian deconstruction of language, i.e., his silencing of the hardened and accumulated layers of meaning so as to allow the sounding of the original name giving of language.

Zaum, as the notion of a transrational language or alogical poetry, even though interpreted in different ways by the futurist poets and by painters and critics, is a very original contribution to the analysis of the relation of language to art. The first Zaum poems are associated with Kruchenykh's works from late 1912 and early 1913. Khlebnikov's concerns with Zaum also date from that same period.

Even though some specific characteristics in the poetry of Kruchenykh, such as *shift (svdvig)* and *texture (faktura)*, also influenced Malevich's way to Suprematism, *Zaum* remains the fundamental notion nurturing Malevich's growth. This notion is clarified by Kruchenykh in a 1921 manifesto, the "Declar-ation--of-Tr-a-nsr-ational Language."

The manifesto explains that Zaum is a primary form of poetry. Its origins are *protosounds* which need to be written down quickly by the poet. The transrational speaking of Zaum is also supposed to give birth to a *protoimage* which cannot be defined by reason in a precise way. The circumstances usually associated with the attainment of Zaum speech are thus enumerated by Kruchenykh's manifesto: the undesirability to name objects; when one has lost one's mind or when mind is not needed; religious ecstasy; in love and in the
making of images which do not yet have a clear definition. Kruchenykh then declares that the appearance of transrational works may result in a worldwide poetic language which is opposed to Esperanto, for example, because it is born organically.

In addition, Kruchenykh declares that Zaum should allow the possibility of a direct knowledge, in the word, of the mysteries of poetry and of the universe at large, and that it should also promote the coupling of poetic and spoken languages in an unexpected strangeness of sounds. This coupling, i.e., that daily parlance should be poetic, clearly resembles Heidegger's interpretation of poetry, according to which "poetry proper is never merely a higher mode (melos) of everyday language. It is rather the reverse: everyday language is a forgotten and therefore used—up poem, from which there hardly resounds a call any longer."

Khlebnikov's and Kruchenykh's approaches to Zaum poetry are frequently compared in terms of the Dionysian and Apollonian; they nevertheless clearly touch and support each other in the basic notion of a shattering of accumulated conventions in order to grasp language in its melted transrationality, not yet frozen by representational reason.

Malevich's affair with the futurist poets can be characterized, more concretely, in the form of illustrations and the organization of futurist publications and journals, theatrical performances, as well as the writing of essays. Mikhail Matyushin may be regarded as Malevich's initiator and guide in terms of the linguistic affair. Matyushin was the publisher of several books by the futurist poets and he was also responsible for the Russian translation
of *Du Cubisme* by Gleizes and Metzinger.

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Thus some of Malevich's essays — Secret Vices of the Academicians (Moscow, 1916) and Architecture as a Slap in the Face to Ferro–Concrete (Moscow, 1918), for instance — are either direct contributions to futurist publications as in the case of the former (which is an essay concluding Kruchenykh's 1915 publication with the same title) or they are directly borrowed from futurist manifestos, as in the case of the later essay. A Slap in the Face of Public Taste was a manifesto published by David Burliuk, Khlebninkov, Kruchenykh and Mayakovsk y in December 1912. The manifesto proclaims the poets' desire to shake syntax loose, reject orthography and establish the word as a "creator of myth." Architecture as a Slap in the Face to Ferro–Concrete similarly promulgates a revolt against the inadequacy and misuses of the old language of architecture in the face of our "kingdom of machines and motors and their work on earth and space." A closer examination of the traits of the Zaum publications in which Malevich's contributions are present can shed more light on the nature of the Suprematist–Zaum linguistic affair.

Explodity, published in June 1913 by Kruchenykh, illustrated by Kulbin and Malevich (cf. Illustrations 147 and 148), is a theoretically important work in so far as Kruchenykh refers to the predecessors of his Zaum in the linguistic manifestations among Russian religious sectarians. These texts are printed by hand-(pencil -and -rubber-. stamp) in a haphazard manner on sheets of different sizes and colours. Some of the poems on Explodity are simply sequences of words without a clear meaning but carefully organized in their sound.

The Word as Such, a mixture of manifesto and verse, published by Khlebnikov and Kruchenyky in September 1913, is illustrated by Malevich (cf. Illustration 149). It emphasizes the foundation of the poetic work in the word itself. The publication suggests that futurist Zaum poetry must be written and
read in the twinkling of an eye; however, it simultaneously requires a writing and reading full of great difficulty. A very interesting parallel to Kruchenykh's statement that "language should first of all be language; and if it is to remind one of anything, let it remind us of a saw or a poisoned arrow of a savage" [my underlining] can be seen in Malevich's *Englishman in Moscow*, painted in 1914 (cf. Illustration 150).

*Let Us Grunt*, published by Kruchenykh in 1913 with illustrations by Malevich and Rozanova (cf. Illustration 151), presents a conventional typing but punctuation is totally absent and some of the lines are printed in capital letters only. The alogism of the book borders on automatic writing. At first, the speaking of the personages give some semblance of meaning; this is, however, quickly violated by the growing introduction of grammatical incongruities, strange words and fragments of words.

*Piglets*, published by Kruchenykh in 1913 and supposedly co—authored by an eleven—year—old girl (cf. Illustration 152) and *A Game in Hell*, also published in 1913 by Kruchenykh, in collaboration with Khlebnikov — depicting a card game which goes on between devils and sinners in Hell (cf. Illustration 153—156) — are additional publications in which Malevich's collaborations are present.

*Three*, a publication of September 1913 by Elena Guro, Khlebnikov and Kruchenykh, with cover and illustrations by Malevich (cf. Illustration 157—161), reads in the preface written by Matyushin: "The days are not far when the conquered phantoms of three—dimensional space, of the illusory, drop—shaped time, and the cowardly causality ... will reveal before everybody what they really

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Malevich's conquering of those spatial phantoms had already begun as early as July 1913. This is the time of a conference held in Usikirko, Finland, called "The All-National Congress of Futurist Poets" (cf. Illustration 162). Soon after this congress, a declaration signed by Kruchenykh, Malevich and Matyushin appeared in the Petrograd press announcing their decision to organize a futurist theatre under the name Budetlyanin (i.e., Khlebnikov's "Man of the Future") and to enact plays by Khlebnikov, Kruchenykh and Mayakovsky.

The time of the Finnish Congress also coincides with Kruchenykh's writing of the opera *Victory over the Sun*. The poet tells us that he was stimulated, in his writing, by the unusual voice of Malevich and the violin of M. Matyushin. Malevich's stage and costume designs for the opera (cf. Illustration 163-169) constitute the artist's very transition into the experience of the suprematist square. The first public presentation of this spatial liberation in the groundless square would, however, only take place two years later in the famous positioning of the Black Square in the upper corner of the "0.10" exhibition room.

The opera *Victory of the Sun* (cf. Appendix) was performed on December 3rd and 4th, 1913 in Petrograd. The Prologue was written by Khlebnikov, and -the-opera-itself-was-divided-into two acts which are, in their turn, divided into six scenes.

In *Act I* a struggle of the forces of the future and of the past develops throughout the first four scenes. The other two scenes which comprise *Act II* take place in the "Tenth Lands" of the future. Mankind is presented as trying to adapt itself to the new world which has arrived. People fear and even succumb to the power and lightness of that world, which requires a new human spirit.

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6 As quoted by V. Markov, op. cit., p. 125.
strength. The "strongman" is introduced; the sun is conquered. The theme of a conquest of the sun is also present in Mayakovsky's play "Vladimir Mayakovsky," which took place during the same period (December 2nd and 4th) in Petrograd.

Victory over the Sun is a drama with hardly any plot or logical development. The opera essentially conveys a transition, by means of the absurdity of the dramatic structure, to Zaum language. This transition is triggered by the insights into formidable events in a dreadful reality, as epitomized by the conquest of the sun. Among the drawings for the stage décor, Act II, Scene 5 (cf. Illustration 60) already borders on a clear suprematist expression.

IV.3 Malevich's Writings: Language and Suprematism

Malevich characterizes the "New Arts" of Cubism, Futurism and Suprematism as being anti—aesthetic. This means that the new arts are founded on the action of pure energy; they address the sheer economic arrival of mankind in the world of modern machine technology. Malevich declares, in relation to Cubism, that entities first start to remove the pomade which covers their "as suchness." The recovery of "things themselves" by means of a method which attempts to "bracket away" the thick cultural—ideological layers is clearly comparable to the Husserlian phenomenological reduction. Thus Malevich writes that:

MI, p.231. In Cubism art liberated itself from ideological content and began to build its own form. It had for many years served an ideological mistress ... [but]
Cubism has shown us clearly the state of the world, the object; it has indicated that the world's face, after a long formative period is now disintegrating. In this disintegration lies its integral being...⁸

The perception of phenomena in their "as suchness" is, therefore, first introduced, according to Malevich's analysis, with the arrival of art at Cubism. The transrational development of the latter, Malevich emphasizes, in the form of the so-called "alogical Cubism," is a direct correlate of Zaum poetry and represents a primarily Russian feature in the development of Cubism.

Futurism, on the other hand, is analyzed as taking the new cubist perception of phenomena and establishing its underlying dynamic essence. In relation to this essence, we are told that:

... the dynamic power sensed by the artist is incomparably greater than the actual bodies of the machines; and the content of each machine is only a small part of this dynamic power, since each machine is a mere unit from the sum total of the forces of contemporary life.⁹

This destruction of the old way of life stems from our industrial technology and will be conquered by new modern classical forms of art. Not in vain have little aeroplanes emerged from the bowels of the earth ... they are the dust of the earth which flies off-the earth's surface and by this pulverize the globe ...

Art, too, for example, painting in Cubism has attained its highest limit on the surface of the canvas and must transfer itself into time and space, after which begins the pulverization of colour; and piercing further and further into space,

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⁸ MIV, p. 33.
⁹ MII, p. 101.
striving, [my underlining] it will become colourless, it will return to classical tranquility.¹⁰

The experience of Suprematism, as outlined by Malevich's writings, can only be reached by means of the stimuli of Cubism and Futurism. In other words, Suprematism in art comes to the fore only to the extent that Cubism and Futurism have already become the formative environment of art, and thus, when language itself speaks in a cubist and futurist manner. Malevich writes about language and the poet in the following terms:

The poet fears to reveal his groan, his voice, for in the groaning and the voice there are no things; [my underlining] they form pure, naked words, although these are not words as such, but are only contained in words by virtue of the letters. They have no substance; but here is the voice of the poet's being, true and pure, and the poet fears his very self.¹¹

Rhythm and tempo are inherent in the poet, and for him there is no grammar, there are no words; for the poet is told that the spoken word is a lie. But I would say that words are inherent in thought and that there is something more subtle than thought, something lighter and more flexible. To express this in words is not merely false but quite impossible ... [my underlining].

A poet is a person who owns no like, knows no craft, nor does he know which way his God will turn. He is within himself no matter what storm arises and disappears, whatever rhythm and tempo it may bear. How can he think of polishing, sharpening and describing at the moment when the great fire rises in him? [my underlining]

¹⁰ MI, p. 79.

¹¹ MI, pp. 111-12.
He himself; as form, is the agent. His mouth, his throat the means by which God or the Devil will speak. That is to say, he, the poet, whom one can never see, because he, as poet, is bound by form, has the semblance of what we call a man.

The man—form is the same kind of sign as a note or letter, and no more. He strikes within himself and each blow flies into the world.

The poet listens only to his blows and speaks to the world in new word—forms; reason can never comprehend these words, for they are not his, the poet's, but the words of his poetry.

And when reason reveals them to the understanding they are real and serve as a unit of the world ...

Thought has vanished, like some clumsy, cumbersome poem lying motionless in a stone of age—old formation.12

Malevich’s non—objectivity and its correlate in the Zaum of the futurist poets attempt an insight into the essential nature of language by means of the abolition of the supremacy of reason. Words become, rather than a property of the poet—artist, the words of poetry itself. A primeval groan and demented words beyond the grip of reason are thus intrinsic to the essence of language. Malevich, furthermore, considers the highest moment in the poet—artist's service of the spirit to be one of a wordless dialect, an ur'sprache. He goes on to insist that:

If he [man] can achieve an internationality, the annihilation of language, religion, etc., then he will

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MI, pp. 76-77.
achieve a mono—language similar to that [with] which at some time we thought about God, that God does not speak with many tongues. People turn to him in many dialects, he answers in one non—language inspiration which is comprehensible to all. In this deity lies our language which never yet have we outlined\textsuperscript{13} [my underlining].

Malevich considers the nineteenth century a particularly mysterious time when the flame of art slowly burns itself down. He insists that the remaining sparks are extinguished in the morass of economic conditions and in the complete dominion of the technical sciences. The holding sway of technical utilitarianism and unconditional profitability obliterates the shaping power of art, and more specifically, the possibility of architecture as an artistic form. The former conditions thus led poets and painters alike to an essential questioning of language, art, architecture and the technological world in the first two decades of the twentieth century. Malevich explains that this fundamental questioning led poets to \textit{Zaum} and painters to \textit{Non—objectivity}, "against both of which," he declares, "the objectivists and politicians have again raised their banner."\textsuperscript{14} The non—objective and Zaum questioning does not simply reject reason and utilitarianism in order to introduce a rebel irrationality. It is a renewal of reason, its transferring into a new form of relationship to the phenomenal world. If we were to accept the invitation of the authentic poets, Malevich observes, and try to reach the sun, we would realize that the sun, just like the earth, is dark in its essence. "And if every man were to become a sun, then there would be nothing clear and comprehensible for him."

\textsuperscript{13} \text{MIV, p. 61.}
\textsuperscript{15} \text{MIII, p. 77.}
\textsuperscript{14} \text{MII, p. 15.}
IV.4 Zaum Poetry and the Space of Suprematism as the Non—Objective Spatiality of Dasein

Suprematism—as—Architecture, Malevich's determination of art as the *threshold* whose completeness is only reached in the gathering of the many suprematist fragments in the context of the artist's funeral—performance is, therefore, built from a linguistic beginning in the form of an affair with Zaum futurist poetry. This affair introduced Malevich to an essential questioning of the relationship of art and language.

We need to ask, in view of our previous investigations, what basic characteristics of language, as determined by the Zaum poets and Malevich himself, may further clarify our interpretation of the space of Suprematism as the transition to the non—objectivity of the spatiality of *Dasein*.

We can readily identify, among those basic characteristics: the transrationality of language; its independence from a condition of being simple means of human expression; and the perception of the "as suchness" of the word as a realm of dormant wisdom.

In the first place, the transrationality of language brings to the fore the metaphysical determination of reason or logic as the representational securing of beings in objectivity. The poetic transrationality promulgated by the futurists speaks of a new rendering of truth as being free from the limitations of both rationalism and irrationalism. The latter is nothing but a reversed trust in reason and, as such, equally rational.

The transrationality of *Zaum* directly reflects the fulfillment of Western metaphysics, as logic, in Nietzsche's nihilism—as the devaluation of the highest values hitherto (logic included) and their subsequent revaluation — which introduces the necessity of a new distinctive consciousness and a new relationship to language and to the determination of beings. A new essence for
mankind is thus posited: the Overman becomes necessary. And due to the fact that the godly withdrew into silence, the Overman is left to his own devices and, therefore, must grant himself this new essence and also accomplish a new relationship to beings which may overcome the project of absolute domination over every being, a project already in full swing.

The Overman is clearly paralleled by the futurist Budetlyane, i.e., the strongmen of the future who must accomplish a victory over the Sun. The Overman nihilistically negates the former essence of man as animal rationale. The new mankind, in the supremacy of consummate subjectivity must encounter reason and language in a new relationship.

The futurist Zaum poets insisted on the independence of language from a condition of being a means of human expression. Heidegger explains that in so far as language is viewed as a means of expression, words are transformed into instruments for talking, broadcasting and printing. He determines the essential independence of language by proclaiming It the master of man; language tells mankind how to dwell. Even though we are allowed to act as the masters and shapers of language, "it is language that speaks," Heidegger observes.\footnote{Heidegger, M. "Poetically Man Dwells," in Poor\textquoteleft, Language, Thought. New York: Harper & Row, 1971, p. 216.} "Man first speaks when, and only when, he responds to language by listening to its appeal," he concludes.\footnote{Ibid.}

Our deeply ingrained understanding of language as expression of human feelings and of a "world view" blocks our access to a more fundamental insight into the essential nature of language. Heidegger calls language the House of Being; he insists that beings can only be in that precinct. "This is why," he writes, "the return from the realm of objects and their representation into the innermost region of the heart's space can be accomplished, if anywhere, \textit{only in}
When we dwell in the speaking of language our responding becomes synonymous with an *authentic appropriation of our Dasein*.

The transition from the representational space of perspectival and categorizing reason, the logical space of Euclidean three—dimensionality, to the space of Suprematism as the non—objectivity of the spatiality of Dasein can only be attained in the listening to the speaking of language. That transition is fundamentally linguistic to the extent that language is reinstated as the master of man. Language, then, speaks and our mortal listening grants us a dwelling on earth, and thus, an authentic building.

Ernst Cassirer writes that art, myth and language have a unified beginning which is only divided into a triad of independent creative modalities with the gradual emergence of the subject—object split. He observes that mythical cosmologies everywhere and as far back as we can reach, grant language and the word the unique position of *creator, i.e.,* in the very beginning the word of language *first had to be.*

If we could agree that language remains particularly relevant to the spatiality of Dasein, and therefore, to the space of Suprematism—as—Architecture, how can we place ourselves in another "affair" with language, considering that our modern condition has replaced the guidance and protection of language (in the form of our myths and in the names of the Gods) with the silence of *means of expression?*

The dominance of the modern subject's parlance coincides with our being abandoned by language in the silence of the world. The fullness of nature remains a still centre from which absolutely nothing can be heard. *The silence of the world, however, speaks of the non—objectivity of the entirety of nature.*


Being is certainly crossed out by Heidegger; it refuses words by which it could be called. Yet Heidegger declares that our destitution and abandonment no longer remain if we dare into the speaking of language as the "peal of stillness."

Speaking about the poet's unique moment of a wordless dialect, Malevich writes:

Here there can be neither craft, nor artistry, for other sensations and aims will weigh heavily upon him.

Ule Elye Lel Li Onye Kon Si An Onon
Kori Ri Koasambi Moyena Lezh Sabno
Oratr Tulozh Koalibi Blyestorye Tivo
Oryenye Alizh

In this the poet has exhausted his lofty action; he cannot compose these words and no one can imitate him.\textsuperscript{20}
Conclusion

It would have been, perhaps, more appropriate not to conclude this dissertation. Malevich's works are most certainly complete in the wholeness of Suprematism—as—Architecture. His funeral-performance is his "chef—d'oeuvre" not so much because it is a unique performance and a gathering of suprematist fragments, but rather because it is the very summit of Malevich's thinking concerning non—objectivity and the zero of form. It is the dying of the artist.

In this context, therefore, a conclusion for our efforts to "open the way" to Malevich's works remains an insufficiency, for each one of our ways of securing and of strongly stating remains necessarily incomplete and hangs in the border of the abyss as the absolute openness of the wholeness of our own Dasein.

It is, nevertheless, very timely to follow the suprematist path as a form of granting ourselves the privilege of an evaluation of our capacity and daring, as "builders," in the treading of our own paths towards the same non—objective wholeness.

Why should we, the architects, be bothered at all with this conversation about our mortal nature? Why should Malevich, for example, disturb us? Why should we let our thinking enter so much into the "greatness" of Nietzsche's and Heidegger's thought (a "greatness" which necessarily demands our unconditional courage to adequately prepare a confrontation with their philosophies, and particularly, with their "Nazism")? Why should we find an authentic way to our mortality in this peculiar, god—less world of machine technology? Why the "pessimism" of death vis—à—vis the "optimism" of our "luminous" and "safe" metallic world? Simply because the abyss of the pure and complete draft, in Heidegger's understanding, holds and remarks everything:
He among mortals who must sooner than other mortals, and otherwise then they, reach into the abyss, comes to know the marks that the abyss remarks. For the poet [Hdlderlin] these are the traces of the fugitive gods. In Holderlin's experience, Dionysus, the wine—god, brings the trace down to the god—less amidst the darkness of their world's night. For in the vine and in its fruit, the god of wine guards the being toward one another of earth and sky as the site of the wedding feast of men and gods. Only within reach of this site, if anywhere, can traces of the fugitive gods still remain for god—less men.'

The essence of the supematist experience of the 1913 square is the unheeded pain and darkness of our "glorious" technological age. The late figurative works, as we have analyzed, put the solidification of all abstractionist projects at risk; they establish, within the fullness of Supematism—as—Architecture, Art as the Threshold. Thus Malevich speaks of art as the great risk, art proper is the danger at the face of which we flee. Risk, danger and pain are, however, our daily sustenance.

The threshold is the ground—beam that bears the doorway as a whole. It sustains the middle in which the two, the outside and the inside [my underlying], penetrate each other. The threshold bears the between ... the dependability of the middle must never yield either way. The settling of the between needs something that can endure, and is in this sense hard. The threshold, as the settlement of the between, is hard because pain has petrified it. ... Pain is the joining agent in the rending that divides and gathers.²

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Suprematism—as—Architecture asks the question of modern man's genuine dwelling, the question of the "supreme" man. It asks: how capable of death is the god—less Nietzschean man? Therefore, this question simultaneously asks: how capable of genuine building are we? Authentic building, according to Heidegger, is the building of the architects who still remain poets; "such poets as take the measure for architecture, the structure of dwelling." Poetry, however, is nothing more than our capacity to dwell as the mortals we most appropriately are.

We also need, because of our speaking of "mortals" and "death" in the context of Suprematism—as—Architecture, to invade the realm of the fourfold, as introduced by Heidegger in the essay "Building Dwelling Thinking." This fundamental quadrangular realm is constituted by the primal oneness of earth and sky, divinities and mortals. The oneness of the four is the free sphere which safeguards each thing in its own nature. Heidegger emphasizes that "the relationship between man and space is none other than dwelling, strictly thought and spoken."

Thus whatever allows spaces in the sense of the gathering of the four in their oneness shelters and houses the lives of men, even though this "housing" may not necessarily have doors, windows or even foundations in its mysterious whiteness.

It can be sustained that the archi—tectons in the context of the funeral—performance, attempt to retrieve that most ancient and quickly forgotten meaning of techné as the letting appear among the already present. In the terms of our given modern dwelling, as the Ge—stell of machine technology, the Architectons accomplish techné by making our present way of building worthy of questioning.

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1 In "... Poetically Man Dwells...," op. cit, p. 227.

And this is particularly so because even the terror of, for example, the Nazi gas chambers (the industrialization of the death of millions of "outsiders") rapidly falls into well disguised oblivion under the aspect of a mere historical "fact of war." The Holocaust should, at the least, make us more thoughtfully responsible towards the essence of technology. Our unconditional fascination with the power of the super—industrialized societies and their insurmountable technological organization does not grant us the clarity of a vision in which a "historical fact" shows its innermost essence to the full.

The unconditional self—assertion of technological objectification renders our fundamental possibility of dying as negative and thus even worthy of eradication, if the technological means for the latter becomes available. The modern Sisyphus negates the uttermost possibility of Being and thus alienates himself from the summit which is always present and already before him.

The representation which characterizes technology as the domination of the calculating production of reason is, in Heidegger's understanding, an "act without an image," because it interposes itself as this calculating objectivity before our possibility of seeing things in agreement with the image they may offer to the immediateness of our perception. When we obliterate the "logic of the heart" we simultaneously lose our capacity to die and in this loss we make our dwelling on earth a destitute assault on things. In Heidegger's words:

Mortals are men. Men are called mortals because they can die. To die means to make death possible as death [my underlining]. ... Death is the shrine of the nothing, of that which is never in any respect a mere being, but which all the same comes to presence as the very mystery of Being itself. As the shrine of the nothing death shelters the presencing of Being in itself.

Death is the still unthought standard of the immeasurable, that is, of the supreme play to which man is introduced on earth, and in which he is at stake.\(^6\)

Therefore, opening "the way" to K. Malevich's works simply means \textit{perversion}; Suprematism is \textit{per-verso} in so far as every securing of "the way"is brushed a–way. Away from the \textit{versu}— the lines and fixed courses — into the field of the essence of man, into our ownmost verse of the never–finished poem. This pathless condition is clearly emphasized by Malevich:

Our day and age stand on a purely practical utilitarian progression (the iron sickness) and only extends the method of the ideas of economic and material blessings. ... Art itself has become more limited, more narrowly political. ... The line of art which gave a push or impetus in the direction of pure culture was pulled, in one of its parts, towards the line of household–political progression. The artists, moved by agitation, have stretched this line of art towards production. Part of them followed the idea giver, the leader ... and declared their art to be constructivist (they have become pathway people). The other has remained on its own line of pure art (non–objectivists), the people without a path.\(^7\)

---:--if our modern days have truly swept way the gods, if our modern days are truly these of the proletarian revolution, and not the revolution of the gods, is there not a conspiracy of the old gods to mould even the proletarian revolution into a form of religious vestment...?\(^8\)


\(^{7}\) MIII, p. 257.

\(^{8}\) MIII, p. 262.
the paths lying beyond the boundary of images, symbols and amulets are closed to you.⁹

We stand before another mystery of the hidden meaning of the universe... 10

We consciously dug into the heart of the earth, for we had rejected the earth in ourselves.¹¹

... you cannot light up anything in gloom, and you cannot express anything, for light and darkness are one and the same matter on two different levels.¹²

The future is the beginning which having completed a certain path has gone back to itself ... All aims must be justified by their future return to the starting point.¹³
MIII, p. 332. MIII, p. 312. MI, p. 53.

MIII, p. 70. MIII, p. 13.