

The Aesthetics
of Production
in the Third Reich

by

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The attempt to legitimize political rule through aesthetic symbolization is perhaps the decisive characteristic distinguishing twentieth century fascist regimes from other forms of authoritarian domination. Under National Socialism, aesthetics and politics were integrated not only in mass festivals and public architecture, but in the sphere of production as well.

Under the slogan – ‘the German everyday shall be beautiful,’ – the Bureau of Beauty of Labour (*Amt Schönheit der Arbeit*) attempted to radically transform both the interior and exterior landscape of the German industrial plant. After 1934, intensive efforts to persuade management to remodel and renovate the work-place became a central focus of the German Labour Front. According to Robert Ley, head of the Labour Front, prior to National Socialism workers had been systematically convinced that their activities served no higher purpose, that their labour was only a commodity, that they were proletarians.¹ Beauty of Labour would return to the worker ‘the feeling for the worth and importance of his labour.’² Albert Speer, the bureau’s director, envisioned the emergence of ‘a new face of the German work-place’ and a new epoch that no longer considered factory architecture inferior.³ In the past degraded to a ‘joyless compulsion’, labour itself would now give way to ‘a new spirit’, manifested in the ‘new formation of the environment.’⁴

Beauty of Labour combined social policy with cultural policy in a single administrative unity. Its function, the creation of social harmony, was to be achieved through aestheticization of labour relations. Aesthetic illusion was integrated into concrete social forms, motivated by political goals. As such, Beauty of Labour is a paradigm of the aestheticized politics characteristic of National Socialism.

Moreover, factories were not simply beautified by improvements in their external appearance; the subordination of human subjectivity to industrial processes was itself expressed in an aesthetic form. If Nazism had brought about the political subordination of labour, it returned to it a cultural image that 'would liberate physical labour from the curse of damnation and feelings of inferiority which had imprisoned it for hundreds of years.'⁵

Beauty of Labour's ideological function was underscored by the limitations which the National Law of Labour, adopted in January 1934, placed on the Labour Front by establishing the absolute hegemony of management within the industrial enterprise.⁶ The resulting dual structure of authority separated possession of the means of production from the instruments of political control and legitimation.⁷ Through Beauty of Labour the control of management over labour could be furthered, while still maintaining the appearance of Labour Front activity in the interests of labour. The aesthetic transformation of the workers' environment was to result in a political transformation of the German worker.

Beyond its specific ideological function within the Labour Front, the development of Beauty of Labour reflects the profound change in Nazi culture and ideology that emerged after the seizure of power. Increasingly, Nazism was forced to reconcile its earlier programme and ideology to the demands of an industrial society in crisis.⁸ Especially after 1936, when the Four-Year Plan and 'war economy in peacetime' became the *ultima ratio* of Nazi policy, and when full productive capacity and the labour shortage brought about a greater effort to raise industrial output and efficiency through rationalization and the intensification of labour, Beauty of Labour embodied a reversal in the traditional ideological substance of Nazi cultural policy. By combining industrial psychology with a technocratic aesthetic that glorified machinery and the efficiency of the modern plant, Beauty of Labour signified the emergence of a new dimension in Nazi ideology. In its image of technology and design, its architectural principles, and above all in its growing functionalism in all areas, Beauty of Labour is a striking example of the Nazi modernism and cult of productivity and efficiency which eclipsed the traditionalism of earlier Nazi ideology in the late 1930s.

The bureau was founded on 27 November, 1933, as a branch of the Nazi leisure organization, 'Strength through Joy'.⁹ According to Speer, the idea was originated by Ley himself who, while on a trip in the province of Limburg, was impressed with the neatness,

cleanliness and well-tended gardens of the Dutch mines.¹⁰ From the outset, extensive plans were developed to encourage German plant managers to beautify and remodel their factories and work rooms. By the end of 1935, over 100 million Reichsmarks had been spent on the remodelling work.¹¹ The external appearance of more than 12,000 plants was improved; rubble and unkempt areas were cleared away, lawns and parks were planted for rest and recreation areas, rooms were painted, floors washed, work clothing repaired and new washing and sanitation facilities installed and improved.¹²

These initial efforts only anticipated the broader effort to redesign Germany's industrial landscape after 1936. This first 'cleanup' phase was superseded by a greater emphasis on technical 'campaigns' to improve plant facilities.¹³ In May 1935, a campaign against plant noise was carried out, followed by the often repeated 'Good Light – Good Work' programme for improving plant lighting. Information centres were set up in all major cities to provide technical and scientific information on proper lighting, and to advise employers in making the necessary changes.¹⁴ In February 1937 the campaign for 'Clean People in Clean Plants' was organized, resulting in large scale renovations of washing and wardrobe facilities. In May of that year the bureau launched its campaign to improve air and ventilation in work rooms, followed by the campaign for 'Hot Food in the Plant' in September 1938.¹⁵ This greater emphasis on technical changes was also reflected in an important change in the leadership of the bureau. Speer himself had always been too occupied with other duties to concern himself with the day to day projects of the bureau, and entrusted the task to his representative director.¹⁶ In August 1936 Karl Kretschmer, a Labour Front ideologue who had been the first to occupy this post, was replaced by Herbert Steinwarz, a specialist in plant engineering with an orientation toward functional aspects of plant design.¹⁷

These efforts coincided with intensive work on aesthetic aspects, especially the development of model designs for the interiors of offices, canteens and work rooms. Designs for furniture, light fixtures, tableware and other interior furnishings were completed.¹⁸ Moreover, an agreement between the bureau and the *Reichskammer der bildenden Kunst* in 1936 facilitated the extensive employment of artists by 'plant leaders' for purposes of painting wall mosaics in 'community houses' built for leisure time activities, designing furniture and occasionally decorating the workrooms of handicraft enterprises. Particularly in rural plants, these decorations depicted *völkisch* scenes

or reflected traditional workmanship and simple materials. The most extensive application of pre-industrial forms to the plant environment, however, was the widespread use of wall sayings, either from historical figures, or from Hitler and other Nazi leaders. A strong emphasis on the re-design of the entrance and gate of the plant, often done in detailed wrought iron with medieval figures, also carried a strong *völkisch* symbolism.¹⁹

Nevertheless, the expanding tasks of the bureau created an ever increasing functionalism. Steinwarz's appointment signalled the shift to greater concern with the technical design of work spaces and architectonic questions. In each national district specially designated 'trusted architects' were appointed to carry out architectural and design projects undertaken by employers in accordance with the bureau's specifications. Administratively, the bureau expanded from a staff of four, housed in a Berlin apartment house in 1933, to five fully staffed subdivisions by the end of 1939: I. Administration; II. Artistic Plant Design; III. Technical Plant Design; IV. Research and Enlightenment; V. Beautiful Village. The second division was concerned with development of models for both industrial interiors and for the small number of 'model plants' designed and constructed by the bureau annually. The division of technical plant design was charged with the practical evaluation and application of scientific and engineering research on light, noise, ventilation and dust in the work environment. The enlightenment section promoted the various projects of the bureau, and more important, created initiative among 'plant leaders' to adopt the measures proposed, while making available the technical and cultural information gathered in the other divisions. Special departments for sea-going vessels and plant transportation were included in the second division, and the fifth division, concerned with beautifying the German village, was established as a separate organization during the 'Beautiful Village' campaign of 1936.²⁰

By 1938 the annual expenditure by German employers on Beauty of Labour inspired projects reached 200 million Reichsmarks. The bureau's expanding functions included constructing sports facilities, designing kitchens, canteens, community houses, dormitories and resort homes. By the end of 1938, 67,000 plants had been visited and inspected by the bureau, 24,000 new wardrobe and washrooms were installed, 17,000 park areas were provided and 3,000 new sports facilities built, at a total cost of over 900 million Reichsmarks.²¹

These accomplishments are all the more impressive in light of the bureau's lack of any legal authority to impose changes on the 'leader'

of a particular enterprise. The bureau could only advise management on remodelling work undertaken at their initiative and expense. Restricted by the National Law of Labour, Beauty of Labour was limited to a variety of methods developed to persuade German industrialists that their interests would be served by adopting its recommendations. Even unsolicited visits to plants were blocked by statute. As a result, throughout 1934 the bureau appealed to the factory inspectors (*Gewerbeaufsichtsbeamte*) to extend their support for its activities by informing plant leaders of the purposes and goals of the bureau, cautioning, however, that the undertaking remained a 'voluntary beautification of the workplace,' and in no way infringed on the jurisdiction of the factory inspectors.²² In July 1935, the Ministry of Labour issued a six point declaration promising the cooperation of the inspectors by bringing employers into contact with the bureau, advertising its efforts, and informing the bureau of those employers already engaged in remodelling and construction activities. At the same time, however, the bureau was required to inform the factory inspectors of any deficiencies in the facilities of the plant.²³

These methods were gradually supplemented by the 'enlightenment campaigns', which promoted the bureau's projects through exhibitions, films and especially through the journal *Schönheit der Arbeit*, founded in 1936 to depict successful plant alterations and to 'win over plant leaders to the dignity with which labour is viewed in the Germany of Adolf Hitler.'²⁴ A series of special technical books produced along with the major campaigns, included fifteen titles by 1936.²⁵ A number of films were also made to publicize the work of the bureau, including a 1934 dramatization of the physical and psychological transformation of a plant as a result of the efforts of both workers and the employer to introduce Beauty of Labour.

In addition to these campaigns, less subtle methods of coercing management were also employed. Beauty of Labour consistently emphasized the economic return which improvements in lighting, noise level, dust, ventilation and hygiene could bring. From the outset, the promise of an increase in the performance of the individual worker was a main incentive for the introduction of these changes, and the bureau's literature emphasized the increased productivity and efficiency which could be gained from the same or even less energy expenditure.²⁶ There were also tax incentives which often provided reimbursement for expenses in the same year, and extended credit opportunities were provided for firms renovating according to the

bureau's specifications.²⁷ Moreover, private industry was often promised 'the recuperation of the sums invested to a certain degree' as a result of the publicity which accompanied particularly successful projects.²⁸

Probably more effective, however, were the directives which compelled state and party enterprises to adopt Beauty of Labour specifications, and ordered the sixteen Federal Plant Communities (*Betriebsgemeinschaft*) to include Beauty of Labour speakers in the mandatory morning plant assemblies.²⁹ Party organizations, particularly the SA, decreed that 'it should not be revealed that an employer who is an SA member heaps his followers into unworthy workplaces and housing in his enterprise.'³⁰ Industrial and military construction also provided opportunities for incorporation of bureau designs, as did the temporary workers' housing built by the Labour Front.³¹ Furthermore, the position of 'trusted architect' gave industrial architects complying with the bureau's specifications the advantage of commissions and employment in the Labour Front's extensive building programmes, as well as in private industrial construction.³²

Above all, benefits for management were formulated in terms of Ley's statement that 'the best social policy is also the best economic policy', and could be measured, not only in calculations of profit and loss, but by the 'comradeship and joyful work spirit of the employees.'³³ Full colour cartoon films made these points with Disneyesque figures: the 'renewal' of the 'plant leader' (an elephant) was paralleled by the joy of the employees (giraffes, cats and hippos) resulting from the enlightened introduction of Beauty of Labour.³⁴ The official handbook of the bureau formulated the basis of its activity as paragraph 7 of the National Law of Labour which held that 'the German Labour Front secures labour peace insofar as it creates an understanding in the plant leader for the just claims of his following, and in the following an understanding for the situation and possibilities of the plant.'³⁵ According to Kretschmer 'politics, economics and art went together in the effects of the bureau of Beauty of Labour. From the political viewpoint we want the community of men; the economy wants the best performance; and art wants to beautifully form the life of the community.'³⁶

The direct advantages for labour were less easy to demonstrate. The destruction of the legal trade unions, suppression of working class organizations, and the freezing of wages at depression levels throughout the Nazi period, only underscored the compensatory function that motivated these measures. Despite Beauty of Labour's

assertion that 'the basis for joy in work and genuine satisfaction can only be created when work can successfully be removed from the sphere of purely material considerations, and given a higher, ethical meaning', reports of the factory inspectors often indicated the reluctance of workers to make use of new facilities.³⁷ The resistance of labour was not softened when support for the efforts of enlightened management meant that free labour had to be provided as 'voluntary overtime'. Beauty of Labour's modifications often met with the remark that 'money spent on the water closet should have been distributed among the workers.'³⁸ Nevertheless, Labour Front representatives (*Vertrauensmänner*) and plant stewards not only could exert pressure on a recalcitrant 'plant leader', but on the recalcitrant 'following' which might exhibit reluctance when faced with the prospect of extending the workday to install new shower facilities or even to build a factory swimming pool.³⁹ Plant task force members (*Werkschärmänner*), SA, SS and other party members were expected to demonstrate an exemplary attitude towards the other workers in creating 'the spirit of comradeship and solidarity that would serve to defeat the anti-spirit of the class struggle.'⁴⁰

The success of Beauty of Labour's efforts to legitimate Nazi policy toward the industrial worker should not, however, be underestimated. The scepticism which often accompanied the bureau's initial efforts to enlist the support of both employers and workers was, according to official Labour Front publications, largely overcome, and its ideological benefits were, in fact, reaped.

At the beginning of the activity of the bureau, Beauty of Labour was an unknown slogan for the working man, which many thousands did not believe could be realized, a propaganda slogan which even many plant leaders thought impossible. And today? A knowledge that gives every working German the certainty that everything is being done in order to keep his working life and workplace, as well as his free time, beautiful, worthy and healthy.⁴¹

Community activities provided by management and integrated into the plant with the aid of Beauty of Labour paralleled, and often improved upon, the facilities provided by Social Democratic, Christian and trade-union organizations. Community houses were built, canteens and dining halls added or remodelled, small factory roof gardens and lawn areas provided for rest periods, and plant flower gardens 'were cared for with careful hands.'⁴² For workers unable to make use of 'Strength through Joy' travel opportunities, Beauty of Labour encouraged plants to provide holiday homes. For women workers

entering the labour force in increasing numbers after 1936, Beauty of Labour proposed that day care facilities be established or shared among a few enterprises.⁴³ Providing for these needs did not, however, always lessen the burden imposed by them: 'The comrades of the kitchen department are voluntarily assisted by the women and girls of the factory in the rapid distribution of the well prepared food.'⁴⁴

Above all, sports and entertainment was a main consideration. Plant leaders were advised on the design and construction of sports areas, accommodating a growing demand for sports activities during work time. Sports could, it was hoped, combine the discipline and comradeship necessary for developing an esprit de corps within an enterprise while restoring stiff muscles. Storage rooms were turned into a 'little paradise of indoor sports.'⁴⁵ Orderly exercises and gymnastics were regularly scheduled for pauses in the afternoons, and boxing, football and ping-pong were popular diversions. Between August and September 1938, a national 'sport appeal' (*Sportsappell*) was held to encourage athletics in all German plants. By 1938 some 10,000 plants had established sport clubs and intra-plant sports were greatly expanded.⁴⁶

Combined with the community activities provided by the Labour Front's cultural bureau (*Kulturamt*) and bureau of *Feierabend* for after-work activities, and linked to the travel network of 'Strength through Joy', Beauty of Labour's community ideology reflected a strong utopian image of non-alienated and non-proletarianized labour. Even popular Social Democratic symbols, such as Kautsky's 1904 vision of the 'worker [who] will one day drive his own car, cross the oceans with his own ships, climb the alpine regions, and find bliss in the beauty of the south and the tropics', became recurrent motifs in the Labour Front.⁴⁷ Bourgeois imagery notwithstanding, the real powerlessness of labour in economic and political life was counteracted by the authoritarian administration of an objectified appearance of socialism, combining the promises of emancipation with an extensive depoliticization of industrial relations.

Beauty of Labour was to provide an environment in which all consciousness of 'proletarity' would disappear.⁴⁸ In contrast to Marxism which was accused of exploiting the ugly and grey everyday life of the worker in the era of liberal capitalism for its own ends, Hitler referred to Beauty of Labour as the 'socialism of the deed.' The historical experience of the proletariat was to be dissolved in the plant and national community. According to Wilhelm Lotz, the editor of *Schönheit der Arbeit*:

And when another saying of the Führer goes: 'in the future there will be only one more nobility, the nobility of labour', this shows that the proletarian colouring of the concept 'labourer' and the fighting attitude toward another rank has been extinguished. Accordingly, all literary attempts to construct a proletarian culture have become pointless and forgotten. There is only one culture and one life form, that of the German people. It is clear that from all the efforts to transform the plant into a cell of community life, a life style of the German worker must emerge.⁴⁹

The embellishment of the factory in *Beauty of Labour* was to be a demonstration of the 'palpability of the socialist idea.'⁵⁰ The objectification of the image of community in the external forms of the German industrial landscape was intended to reconstitute the soul of the German worker.

The creation of *Beauty of Labour* as an element of state social policy was unique to National Socialism. Its attempt to produce a 'more joyful transformation of the everyday environment' was anticipated, however, by the nineteenth century tradition which identified the beautification of the workplace with the 'deproletarianization' of labour.⁵¹ More than a century earlier, Fourier envisioned 'attractive labour', in which 'the workshops and husbandry offer the labourer the allurements of elegance and cleanliness'.⁵² Buckingham's *Victoria* and the Garden Cities movement of the early 1900s were also predicated on the view that 'air, light and sunshine could heal the damages of industrial labour.'⁵³ By dissociating industrial processes from the image of human degradation in an inhuman and squalid environment, enlightened paternalistic entrepreneurs wanted to restore the social balance.⁵⁴ Similarly motivated were the Napoleonic *cités ouvrières* in the 1860s, the model English villages Bournville and Port Sunlight built by George Cadbury and W. H. Lever in the 1880s, and Alfred Krupp's industrial settlements in the 1870s. Open spaces, low density, and aesthetic designs were merged with political considerations. At the root of these projects was the motivation expressed by Krupp when he began the extensive construction of industrial settlements comprised of 'small houses with little gardens', in the hope that 'when a general revolt goes through the land, an uprising of all classes against their employers, we may be the only ones spared, if we can get everything into motion while there is still time.'⁵⁵

After 1900 the integration of specifically aesthetic motifs took on increasing importance. In Germany, Heinrich Tessenow, Speer's teacher, designed the gymnasium and dormitory buildings for

Wolf Dohrn's experimental Garden City, Hellerau, built between 1911 and 1912 to institute a reform in the nature of education.⁵⁶ Tessenow's theoretical writings, even more than his designs, reveal his concern with the relationship between aesthetics and the industrial process. For Tessenow architecture had to affirm the principle that 'the prosperity of industrial labour demands a health or strength that is composed of simple bourgeois character.'⁵⁷ These bourgeois virtues of simple diligence, seriousness, persistence, love of order, and cleanliness, were to be embodied in architecture and symbolized in respect for the economy of technical form, order, symmetry and external cleanliness. In England, the values objectified in the design of the model cities were extended to the plants themselves. At Bournville, the Cadbury chocolate factory distributed a brochure to its visitors entitled 'the factory in the garden', describing its lawns, trees, wooded areas, and canaries and flowers in the work rooms. In 1931 the English Industrial Welfare Society promoted the slogan, 'beauty and success in work go hand in hand', and the Glasgow machine factory of Wallace Scott & Co. painted its machines blue, its girders grey, its railings green, and other parts of the plant red and gold so that the colours would reflect light and 'make the plant lively.'⁵⁸

These efforts gained remarkable currency in Germany as a result of the variety of schools of industrial psychology that grew out of Hugo Münsterberg's work on the subjective dimension of the labour process in the decade before the first world war. Münsterberg was the first to recognize the advantages for industry of 'psychotechnics', the scientific measurement of the effects of 'fatigue, temperature, dampness, body positions – including seating and the position of work materials – the influence of overeating, flower aromas, coloured lights, dance music and other external factors on emotional life.'⁵⁹ Despite the proliferation of approaches, from Münsterberg's 'psychotechnics' to more metaphysical schools which called for 'the renewal of the soul of production', all shared the goal of reintegrating the individual into an industrial work process which, as a result of Taylorization, had been reduced to the carrying out of predesigned detailed tasks. Through the manipulation of the objective milieu, means could be found to reduce the overt and remediable 'subjective' dissatisfaction of the worker toward what was regarded as an irreversible 'petrification' of the work process.⁶⁰

In the decade before the Nazi seizure of power these attempts to placate the worker were increasingly politicized in a conservative direction by class conflict, and by resistance to the intensive

rationalization movement that swept German industry between 1924 and 1928, introducing Taylorism, technification, and the standardization of parts and goods on a large scale.⁶¹ Of particular importance was the influential school of industrial sociology developed by Götz Briefs and his co-workers, L. H. Adolph Geck and Rudolf Schwenger. Briefs combined the insights of earlier theorists with a political strategy aimed at the practical transformation of industrial relations through direct managerial intervention. In Briefs' view the industrial plant was a completely isolated 'social sphere', distinct from both the economic and technical aspects of production, which could be organized and directed by a conscious policy in line with demands for discipline, adaptation and hierarchy.⁶²

Despite Briefs' own emigration in 1934, his work was carried on by his students, particularly Geck, who provided Beauty of Labour with its theoretical basis in his textbook *Soziale Betriebsführung* (1938), and in a series of articles on the development of Beauty of Labour in other countries.⁶³ Modern industry, Geck argued, could not rely for its stability on the moral bond between subservient workers and paternalist management which he so highly praised in the nineteenth century enterprise. On the contrary, by adapting the aesthetic dimensions pioneered by the English model cities and American attempts to domesticate labour through plant aesthetics, Geck integrated Beauty of Labour into 'scientific' industrial policy. As a member of the Briefs' school, he believed that 'the maximum of work efficiency and the comforts of human relations in the workplace' could be guaranteed. Geck distinguished between two aspects of 'plant leadership': personnel and functional. While the former was concerned with questions of administration, wages, labour time, training and education, the latter was the domain of Beauty of Labour.

For Geck, the bureau's work encompassed three essential areas – the exterior of the plant, the interior, and the individual workplace.⁶⁴ He pointed to the importance of a sleek and unpretentious factory architecture, and called for the extensive introduction of glass in industrial construction, as well as for the aesthetic importance of lawns and gardens in the factory surroundings. Colour and cleanliness, good lighting and ventilation, and the remodelling of washrooms and canteens were all singled out for their 'practical importance as well as for the co-existence between the work comrades and the employer' which they promoted.⁶⁵ Throughout the 1920s and 1930s modern lunch rooms, health facilities, rest areas, gymnasiums, athletic fields, parks and special housing were established in many European and

American factories to improve plant relations.⁶⁶ Geck's handbook clearly established Beauty of Labour's role as an extension of the science of industrial relations developed in that period. Yet Geck believed Beauty of Labour had gone further. In Germany it had realized the project of domesticated labour rooted in the Garden Cities idea. The industrial plant was 'privitized and turned into a comfortable living room.'⁶⁷

This new conception of social policy demanded a strong state which granted management the right to intervene without opposition in industrial relations to secure the new 'occupational ethos' which would also 'win over the worker to the state and for the preservation of traditional national culture.'⁶⁸ At the same time, however, fertile terrain for the potential success of this approach was provided by the general disregard of pre-1933 trade unions for the work environment, and their frequent willingness to abandon fundamental questions about the nature of work for wage settlements in periods of high productivity. Social Democratic theorists, like Otto Bauer, denounced 'lamentations over the spiritlessness of labour' as 'nonsense', while embracing the idea that 'labour is our fate.'⁶⁹ Communist theorists too, following Lenin's endorsement of Taylorism, fully assimilated the cult of technocracy.⁷⁰ Only rarely was the problem of 'joy in work' approached from the socialist standpoint, as in Hendrik de Man's critique of those 'Marxist doctrinaires ignorant of psychology and out of touch with the actualities of life, [who] fail to see that the workers' prevailing discontent is due quite as much to the loss of pleasure in work as to the (problematical) loss of concrete acquisitions.'⁷¹

The myth of an organic and non-alienated form of industrial production, proclaimed by politicized industrial sociology, found its own organic continuity in the National Socialist concept of a deproleterianized and economically peaceful plant. Nevertheless, its appeal to labour was always overshadowed by its promise to management. The allure of 'scientific' plant policy for both employers and the National Socialists was clearly enhanced by the Briefs' School's militant opposition to trade unions, and its extreme anti-socialism. Even the redefinition of management as the 'plant leader' in the National Law of Labour not only ensured the hegemony of the entrepreneur, but also redefined management along the general lines which industrial relations had almost universally established in most advanced capitalist countries. The struggle for survival and the pursuit of self-interest had been superseded by an image of cooperative

teamwork.⁷² Beauty of Labour shared with industrial psychology this faith in the potential transformation of industrial relations in the epoch of mechanical production, Taylorized work-processes, and the depersonalized modern factory. With the elimination of the trade unions, labour relations were merged with ideology in the interests of social control.

The concept of Beauty of Labour contained a number of fundamental ambiguities. It pointed to a return to the 'community of enterprise' characterized by the unity of workman and employer, reestablishing 'the organic unity which existed in the Middle Ages.'⁷³ At the same time, however, it integrated aesthetics into contemporary industrial production, deriving its impulse from the latest stage of industrial psychology. Its nineteenth century paternalism was clouded by real utopian tendencies aimed at the abolition of genuine discontents. These antinomies were eventually superseded however by a cult of technology and production which gradually took precedence in both the propaganda and practice of Beauty of Labour after 1936. The machine, which in the early propaganda of the bureau was assaulted as 'God and Lord over the working man', lost the negativity attributed to it.⁷⁴ What had in fact been a virtual 'demonization' of technology, in which machinery alone was held responsible for the failure of liberal capitalism and the social ills of the pre-Nazi era, turned into its opposite – the glorification of technical rationality through aesthetics.

At the centre of this change was the emergence of an aesthetics of technology and rationalization, derived from the *Neue Sachlichkeit* of the 1920s, in which Beauty of Labour signified the aesthetic reflection of technical rationality and industrial production. Aesthetics not only intervened in the sphere of industrial labour, but industry was itself elevated to the principle by which aesthetic values were to be formed. The new technical aesthetic represented the culmination of a historical development which interpreted the industrial sphere as the source of aesthetic norms. In a direct assault on the Kantian premise that defined beauty as 'purposefulness without purpose', occluding the 'great majority [who] provide the necessities of life, as it were, mechanically,' a new aesthetic emerged which heralded mechanical processes and made utility into a religion.⁷⁵ To be sure, nineteenth century romantic artists, particularly in England, found beauty in the industrial landscape, even in the darkest and most exploitative workrooms.⁷⁶ But the real world of work and machine-production was not yet the paradigm of aesthetics itself. The mythologized image

of industrialization stopped at the door of the 'satanic mills' where 'man returns to a cave dwelling, which is now however contaminated with the pestilential breath of civilization.'⁷⁷ Even the Great Exhibition of 1851, which placed industrial machinery on exhibition as an object of aesthetic contemplation, did not yet fully anticipate the transvaluation of aesthetic value granted to the instruments of production in the twentieth century.

After 1907, however, the *Deutscher Werkbund*, formed to display the best of German art and design, indicated that technics would thereafter not only be considered aesthetic, but – especially after 1914 – that industrial forms and machines would themselves shape the concept of beauty which informed contemporary design. At the annual meeting of the *Werkbund* in 1914, Hermann Muthesius, the leader of the movement for *Sachlichkeit*, defined the principle of the new aesthetic: 'architecture and the entire sphere of activity of the *Werkbund* tend towards standardization. It is only by standardization that they can recover that universal importance which they possessed in ages of harmonious civilization.'⁷⁸ This new technological aesthetic became firmly rooted in Germany through the efforts of the *Werkbund*, and in architecture through the Bauhaus; it determined the fundamental principle of the 'modernist movement'. Beauty was identified with a 'second nature', with mechanical adequacy and technical form. Especially in the artistic and literary *Neue Sachlichkeit*, which gained extraordinary popularity in pre-depression Germany, the new aesthetic celebrated 'the concrete', the thing alone, autonomous of all social relations. The mystique of technical rationality, productivity, efficiency and 'romantic faith in the speed and roar of machines all belonged to the cult of the *sachlich*.'⁷⁹ Paralleling the intensive rationalization of German industry, during the 'upswing' of German capitalism between 1924 and 1928, everything from frying pans to industrial gears were exhibited for their pious adherence to the principles of economy of form, efficiency of design, and mathematical precision. With the extension of modern design to all aspects of everyday life, social relations became mediated by an image of the world derived from technical rationality.

The new aesthetic absorbed the technocratic assumption that the expansion of technical rationality would automatically lead to a more rational social order. Like the technocratic theorists of 'Fordism' and rationalization that had influenced them, its advocates reflected a deep dissatisfaction with the instability of society and the perseverance of pre-industrial social structures and values.⁸⁰ The

utopian dimension embedded in the new aesthetic was a vision of society in which 'a badly functioning social machine had been exchanged for a more perfect one.'⁸¹ This belief in the beneficent *telos* of rationalization was exemplified by writers like Franz Kollman, whose book, *Schönheit der Technik* (1927) saw in machine parts, industrial buildings, structures made of steel, railroads and submarines 'the root of the power of future beauty and culture.'⁸² The new cult of technics contained, however, yet another, perhaps more significant aspect. It reduced real progress to the progress of technics, and the rational constitution of society to the rationality of machine production. By excluding the relations of production, its forces were ontologized. All reminders of the irrationality of what was judged to be the pretechnological epoch were exorcised, as if the old order would simply disintegrate when confronted with the power of the technical form. The rationality of technics, embodied in modern architecture and design, promoted the value of industrial forms without regard for the nature of industrial society. The attempt to repress even the most unobtrusive historical residues, expressed in the attack on ornament, revealed the extent to which this deep hostility to history was translated into a myth — 'a rationalization without ratio.'⁸³

Continuity between the aesthetics of *Neue Sachlichkeit* and Beauty of Labour is apparant in the bureau's personnel as well as its principles. Wilhelm Lotz, the editor of *Schönheit der Arbeit*, was previously editor of *Die Form*, the most influential organ of the *Werkbund* and *Baubaus* in the late 1920s and early 1930s.⁸⁴ Despite his 1928 stand against the Bauhaus's narrow reliance on 'ideas attuned to industrial production,' Lotz perpetuated its fundamental themes. Moreover, although most Bauhaus architects and designers were forced into exile in the early days of the regime, some modern architects, like Ernst Otto Schweizer, were approvingly displayed in *Schönheit der Arbeit*.⁸⁵ Earlier propaganda which, under Kretschmer's directorship, had criticized the 'functionalist boxes of the Republic,' gave way to praise for the principles of modernism in industrial architecture. The machine aesthetic was assimilated in its entirety: 'it can be ascertained that machines, technics, are capable of producing aesthetic satisfaction: they must, however, here only submit to the laws of their own style.'⁸⁶ In an article describing the reorganization of a motor factory according to the latest plant designs, one writer exhilarated: 'As opposed [to the old] the new: there is line, there is style, there is Beauty of Labour.'⁸⁷ Kollman's theories were cited as evidence 'that aesthetic forms no longer stand in contrast to the functional technical form.'⁸⁸

Even if it was questionable that workers shared this taste in relation to the beauty of their own environment, they could be educated to acquire an appreciation of the new style.⁸⁹ The models of tableware and office furniture, designed to serve as standard industrial forms, also reflected — though somewhat subdued and unoriginal — aspects of the 1930s style. This affirmation of the new aesthetic did not go unnoticed. By 1937 the bureau found it necessary to defend itself against critics who saw their life work in inventing slogans like *Neue Sachlichkeit* and ‘constructivism’, increasingly used to characterize the bureau’s projects.⁹⁰

Even from the outset, Beauty of Labour’s emphasis on the hygienic and rational design of the workplace, on lighting, ventilation and other environmental factors, derived its impetus from the rationalization movement of the 1920s. Moreover, even the most technical aspects of Beauty of Labour — the intensive campaigns to improve lighting, air and hygiene — were not simply means of increasing output and social management. The concept of light took on ideological significance, for example, through its opposition to the image of darkness associated with the industrial workplace of liberal capitalism. For Marx that ‘dwelling in the *light* which Prometheus in Aeschylus designated as one of the greatest boons by means of which he made the savage into a human being’ ceased to exist for the worker.⁹¹ In Beauty of Labour the lighting campaigns attempted to signify the reversal of this situation. The film ‘*Light*’, produced by the bureau in 1936, began with a ‘cultural-historical’ introduction describing light as the ‘creative power of all earthly life, reproducing the wish of mankind to illuminate the darkness of night.’⁹² The darkness and blight of the liberal industrial landscape, ‘the plants of the thoughtless sacks of gold’ where ‘the work is sullen, done behind window panes blinded by dust, in cold unfriendly rooms, because it must be done’, was contrasted to the selfless anti-capitalism of Beauty of Labour.⁹³ Nevertheless, the symbolism of illumination as the antithesis of capitalist industry occasionally contradicted the dark image of work romanticized by Labour Front artists. Otto Hamel’s dimly lit *Eisenwerk*, shown at the Munich exhibition of 1937, appeared in *Schönheit der Arbeit* with the following notation: ‘Unfortunately the romanticism of the old workplaces attracts the eye of the painter more than what we understand as Beauty of Labour.’⁹⁴

Cleanliness and order also externalized the model for an internalized work discipline and routine demanded by the rationalized labour process. ‘Cleanliness and order in all externalities, as well as in the

inner attitude of all members of the plant, are the living cells whose gradual growth reaches its high point in the realization of the National Socialist model plants.⁹⁵ The inordinate amount of attention paid to the most modern conveniences in washing apparatus, cleaning of the workplace, personal hygiene, modern toilets, faucets, locker and changing rooms, cannot be explained by German fastidiousness in these matters. Long rows of clean and modern washing facilities were displayed as if modern sanitary equipment extinguished the effects of the working day. The bureau's slogan, 'Clean People – Clean Factories' had moral associations as well. The elimination of that dirtiness, which for Freud was 'incompatible with civilization,' took on ritualistic character in Beauty of Labour. The 'low instincts' and immorality which were said to have been bred in the industrial plants of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries could be erased by removing the unhygienic sources of disease and depravity.⁹⁶ Tied to the goal of 'securing increase in happiness by elevation of the moral tone', hygiene had always been important in the Garden Cities movement.⁹⁷ Tessenow believed that 'everyday work and our industrial worker should not only be clean materially, but clean in whole character and form as well.'⁹⁸

These attitudes were also reflected in the 'cult of the body' which took on objective form in the plant sports and gymnastics which Beauty of Labour helped introduce into 3,000 German factories.⁹⁹ Drawing on the nineteenth century tradition of gymnastics as political training, and adopting methods derived from François Delsare's 'aesthetic gymnastics', introduced to Germany at Emil Jacques-Dalcroze's school for physical culture in Tessenow's gymnasium at Hellerau, body movement was transplanted to the factory in the interests of discipline and greater productivity.¹⁰⁰ What had begun as a revolt against mechanization became, by 1936, an adornment of industrial production itself.

Above all, however, it was in architecture that Beauty of Labour most decisively established what might be termed Nazi *Sachlichkeit*. Before 1936, while the economy remained below full employment and productivity, architecture had been largely limited to public building in the monumental, neo-classical style, or to the *Kleinsiedlung*, the garden plot houses for workers reminiscent of rural cottages and early Krupp settlements. The Four-Year Plan, launched in October 1936, meant not only the extension of state control over labour and industry, but intense concentration on preparation for military mobilization.¹⁰¹ Less practical *völkisch* residues such as the

Kleinsiedlung were abandoned in favour of new apartment blocks in urban areas or temporary housing.¹⁰² Demand for new industrial plants, as well as housing for those workers 'uprooted' and transplanted by state intervention in the labour market, brought about new tasks for Beauty of Labour. The bureau was entrusted with the design of 'simple and purposeful' houses for workers, particularly in rural areas.¹⁰³ Usually these new construction efforts were undertaken by the Labour Front for large industry or by agreement with the military. By 1939 a great deal of the new construction in Germany was either for private industrial purposes or in the hands of the Labour Front's enterprises and housing programmes. Industrial architecture superseded the monumental designs of the pre-1936 phase, incorporating principles derived largely from modernism that underscored the primacy of rationality and efficiency in the sphere of production. By 1938 a special Bureau of Architecture emerged from Beauty of Labour.¹⁰⁴ A conscious distinction was carefully maintained between 'representational' architecture in official party buildings and industrial architecture. Moreover, buildings were required to fit into their surroundings. Hitler himself recognized this distinction between the monumental public style and the factory, and according to Speer, could even become enthusiastic over an industrial building in glass and steel.¹⁰⁵

The distinction between the increasing modernism of Nazi architecture and design and the traditionalism that characterized its earlier ideology was accentuated by the public rooms and buildings designed by the bureau for specifically political functions. In larger factories these distinctly political spaces were located in the 'Comradeship Houses' built in the style of a small rural church, cloister or feudal manor house.¹⁰⁶ The flags and Nazi insignias conspicuously absent in other areas of the plant were present here. Yet this facet of the bureau's work, which also included the 'dignified decoration' of plant assembly places, only served to emphasize the conscious separation of 'purely political' functions from the politicized functionalism of Beauty of Labour.¹⁰⁷

Avowedly modern architects were employed by private industry and their designs approvingly displayed in the bureau's publications. Peter Behrens, the teacher of Gropius and Mies van der Rohe, was commissioned to design the AEG electrical company administration building on the proposed Berlin Grand Boulevard, outraging Rosenberg, who protested against the assignment to a precursor of architectural radicalism.¹⁰⁸ Moreover, not only was Behrens praised for his pre-war

industrial designs, but occasionally even exiled architects like Gropius were openly credited with influencing the bureau's architectural tastes: 'Even more decisively than Behrens, Walter Gropius was drawn to the construction of contemporary industrial facilities . . . Gropius had at that time recognized the economic importance of the beautiful industrial plant buildings.'¹⁰⁹ Unlike the Bauhaus architecture of the early 1930s, however, there was little attention to classical proportions or to the radical use of new materials in most designs. Facades and entrance halls were eclectic and often reflected monumental and neo-classical elements, in sharp contrast to the buildings in the *sachlich* style. Moreover, in contrast to the Bauhaus, which endowed the rejection of ornament and its classical proportions and cubic forms with a utopian vision of total social rationality, Nazi industrial architecture retained only the utilitarian form, subordinating imagination to the demands of production and efficiency. Nevertheless, the motifs of Nazi industrial architecture are decisively modern in inspiration and were in fact largely indistinguishable from non-Bauhaus modernism of the interwar period.¹¹⁰

In early 1937 *Schönheit der Arbeit* began to publish a series of contributions by 'plant leaders' and architects explicitly advocating the new style in industrial construction.¹¹¹ Pre-1933 Nazi propaganda which attacked modernism as architectural 'bolshevism' had to be neutralized. Industrial architecture was proclaimed as 'the most important monument of our time.'¹¹² The old architecture which reflected the 'sins of the past' was condemned – it reflected insufficient cooperation between engineers and architects. Beauty of Labour architects were required to assure the integration of technical achievement and artistic elements. Above all, historical allusion and ornament were to be eliminated: industrial buildings were not to be 'palatial constructs'. Monumental factory architecture which did not 'form an organic whole with the entire plant' was to be replaced by architecture conforming to reality and corresponding 'to the seriousness and importance of the work performed behind its doors.'¹¹³

Among the most significant examples of National Socialist industrial functionalism were the glass, brick and exposed structure buildings constructed for the *Deutsche Versuchsanstalt für Luftfahrt*, completed in 1936-37 by the architects Hermann Brenner and Werner Deutschmann in Berlin-Adlershof.¹¹⁴ The modernism of these buildings is evident in the use of glass, brick, exposed structures, modern lighting, and neatly laid out lawns and streets. The wind tunnels and explicitly geometric patterns of the buildings were praised

as the greatest examples of Beauty of Labour in architecture and as illustrations of the principle that 'a high degree of purposefulness and true beauty are not opposites which exclude each other'.¹¹⁵

Yet for Beauty of Labour, the crowning achievement of industrial architecture was the *Wunderauto* plant near Fallersleben, built to house the Volkswagen project, the showpiece of 'Strength through Joy'; 'The Volkswagen works were to become the most powerful and beautiful automobile factory in the world.'¹¹⁶ In addition to the auto works, a new city was also envisioned, planned for 30,000 auto workers and their families in the first stage alone.¹¹⁷ In May 1938 the foundation stone was laid, and by December of that year the skeletons of the buildings, particularly the production centres, were visible. *Schönheit der Arbeit* devoted a special issue to the new plant. The four great halls, including the energy plant and machine works, were displayed as monuments to the aesthetic superiority of industrial architecture and progress under National Socialism. In fact the celebration was premature — like most social promises of the regime, the car was never delivered. Unfinished by the beginning of the war, the works were converted to the production of arms and military vehicles. No Volkswagens were delivered for private use.¹¹⁸

The new attitude toward technology was reflected in Nazi institutions as well. In 1936, the National Socialist Association for German technology was founded under the direction of Oskar Stäbel in order to bring about a harmony between *Volk* and technology by increasing scientific and technical labour power for the *Wehrpflicht*. In March of that year Beauty of Labour concluded an agreement to cooperate with the association in all technical aspects of the alteration of plant environments.¹¹⁹ Above all, discontent with technology and industrialization, often stressed in pre-1933 *völkisch* theory, had to give way to a concept that emphasized the 'good intentions of rationalization' and the 'virtues of mechanization.'¹²⁰

Even artisan production, still significant in Germany as late as 1939, when one third of all industrial workers were employed in shops of less than ten persons, was forced to increase efficiency and carry out technology improvements. Those artisan shops which survived the state directed 'combing out' of inefficient and one person enterprises remained under government restriction and were to a large extent turned into subsidiary repair shops for large industry.¹²¹ These measures against small industry were echoed in the bureau's campaign for the rationalization of artisan production throughout 1938 and 1939.¹²² After 1938, the productivism of the bureau was

the consistent theme of its publications. The romantic image of the handicraft shop, venerated in the early days of the Nazi movement, was scrutinized and purged of pre-industrial characteristics: old tables, rotten from wood worms, had to be replaced so that handwork could 'understand the needs and demands' of the 'epoch of the machine.'¹²³ Technology was aestheticized as the extension of handicraft production. A series of photographs displaying the aesthetic qualities of hand motions in both mechanized and unmechanized production illustrated the point that 'handicraft work is not eliminated but transformed.'¹²⁴ For *Beauty of Labour* the enormous gears of modern industry became the objects of aesthetic contemplation, and rows of shiny oil cans became a symbol for 'the hand tools of the machine masters.'¹²⁵ The mistrust among German artisans provoked by the technocratic revival was condemned as *Maschinenstürmerei*.

Although in *Beauty of Labour* the ideology of architectural modernism divested itself of the utopianism of the Bauhaus, it preserved the Saint Simonian myth of a rationally functioning capitalism. In the National Socialist 'New Order', the cult of technical rationality embodied in *Beauty of Labour* represented a significant effort to legitimize state regulation and the intensive rationalization of industry. Production and efficiency were idealized as qualities divorced from commercial considerations, the market, and imperial-military aims. The myth of an abolished market society was most apparent in *Beauty of Labour's* successful campaign to remove all traces of commercial advertising from the plant environment.¹²⁶ Implicit was the notion expressed in *Beauty of Labour's* ideology of 'non-economic' production: 'We do not consider the factory as an association for economic purposes.'¹²⁷ At the same time the purely inward focus on the productive apparatus coincided with Germany's actual withdrawal from the world market and its attempt at industrial self-sufficiency through an autarchic arms economy. In architectural modernism and the cult of technics the industrial sphere could be celebrated apart from any political and social aims which it might serve. Social realities could be eliminated by a symbolic reductionism. Modern materials became identical with the epoch itself: 'reinforced concrete and steel construction are closely related to the spirit of our time.'¹²⁸ Yet practical purposes were not lost — the green areas for workers' rest periods could also serve as camouflage in air raids.¹²⁹

The industrial considerations that took priority in *Beauty of Labour* after 1938 dominated not only its ideology, but its practical work

as well. The intensive 'struggle for productivity', announced by Ley in late 1937, directed the bureau's technical agencies to concentrate, from that point on, on the development of programmes to reduce wasted energy and increase productivity. The standardization and functional design of work processes and environments became a crucial component of the new situation. Not only were the workplaces themselves to be redesigned for maximum output, but the worker too had to carry out his work in a 'correct and functional manner.'¹³⁰ New developments in ergonomic research were applied to furniture design to produce modern innovations like the 'norm chair', with an elastic vertical and horizontal adjustable back to benefit the assembly line worker by 'preventing premature fatigue' while increasing output.¹³¹ 'Flowing work' was the goal of the efficiency expert who applied the lessons of electro-technical mass production to the development of 'a psychologically grounded formation of the workplace.'¹³²

Although Beauty of Labour emphasized the principle that 'the higher the output the greater the joy in work', it was the former that received greater attention in the information directed at management. Speaking at the National Conference of Beauty of Labour in April 1938, Ley gave assurances that plant leaders had provided him with statistical evidence that Beauty of Labour 'was not a luxury or a gift, but in the last analysis had been transformed into an increase in production and surplus value.'¹³³ For business, this meant higher profits, but for the worker reductions in consumption, wage controls and longer hours were combined with the intensification of work in the plant.¹³⁴ At the same time, however, the almost exclusive focus on productivity pointed to the failure of Beauty of Labour's earlier efforts to achieve a lasting integration of the German working-class. The 1938-39 struggle for productivity reflected an actual decline in the productivity of labour and growing discontent over the low wages and shortages that accompanied state direction in the labour scarce market.¹³⁵ Already in 1937, the voluntary overtime that was often the source of labour for the bureau's projects was publicly condemned and officially ordered terminated because it represented, in light of the already lengthened work day, an 'almost unbearable burden.'¹³⁶ Nazi productivism was an indication of the growing authoritarianism of state control over labour which, having ultimately failed to 'win over' the working-class, was now subjecting it to the increasing domination of productivity and output.

The bureau's attempts to increase output and efficiency were

designated as 'steered rationalization', distinguished from the oriented rationalization of the 1920s by its 'subordination to political leadership and social policy.'¹³⁷ In fact, 'steered rationalization' differed from the older variety, not in its system, but in its spirit. The changes which Beauty of Labour initiated were 'completely within the meaning of rationalization, the scientific penetration of productive factory labour.'¹³⁸ All aspects of Taylorism — the degradation of work, the dissociation of skill and mental labour from the worker — were accepted by Beauty of Labour as axiomatic. It was not concerned with rationalization *per se*, but with its disadvantageous consequences. The new design of the workplace was in fact a compensatory or remedial form of rationalization, designed to adapt labour to already technified production processes: 'Machines and operations must be so functionally built and arranged that the work can be accomplished within the smallest spaces with the least possible movement and expenditure of energy.'¹³⁹ Even the physiology of the worker had to be rationalized. This was the motivation for Beauty of Labour's campaign for 'Hot Meals in the Plant'. Plant managers were instructed that

plant leadership in nourishment means a further important step towards the rationalization of labour power; the sums invested are — if the comparison is admissible — equally as productive as the expenses for technical improvements in the plant, for construction and machine maintenance, protection from corrosion and so forth.¹⁴⁰

Significantly, Beauty of Labour's unabashed modernism and *Sachlichkeit*, and its focus on the transformation of labour through environmental changes, were contested by a competing Labour Front agency, Karl Arnhold's *Amt für Berufserziehung und Betriebsführung* in October 1936. The controversy underscored the decline of traditional ideology in the Labour Front under the Four-Year Plan. Arnhold, whose *Deutsches Institut für technische Arbeitschulung* (DINTA) represented the extreme right wing of industrial and plant 'engineering' in the 1920s, had criticized the criteria chosen for granting the 'model plant' award, announced in August 1936 to create initiative among industrialists.¹⁴¹ Instead of the 'social, technical and economic' categories that were proposed, Arnhold demanded that criteria be established which followed his own programme for increasing efficiency and 'mobilizing the performance reserves of industry' through a heavily ideological programme of quasi-military training and indoctrination for managers and trainees. Above all, Arnhold challenged Beauty

of Labour's emphasis on the 'material obstacles' to increased productivity at the expense of 'spiritual obstacles'. Neither 'Strength through Joy' nor Beauty of Labour, not even higher wages, could decrease the 'resistance and exhaustion of a worker who worked with psychological blinders.'¹⁴² Although he did not entirely disapprove of the bureau's efforts, he decisively rejected its functionalism and proposed that the 'tempo of the machine be brought into harmony with the rhythm of the blood' through 'the organic formation of the plant' and the militarization of the leadership.¹⁴³ The results of the controversy indicated even more clearly the primacy of Beauty of Labour over Arnhold's more traditional ideological schemes. Technical rationality, and above all the utilitarian standpoint that not indoctrination, but rather the idea that 'each kind of work determines where and how it is to be formed', coincided with the emphasis of the regime and guaranteed that the criteria for the 'model plants' would correspond to the principles of the bureau.¹⁴⁴

After 1939 the bureau was severely limited by reductions in its operating budget brought on by the war. Its activities of the previous half decade were largely abandoned in the interest of contributing to the war effort, mostly by providing technical information on the construction of shelters, troop entertainment centres, methods of improving blackout techniques, and energy saving measures.¹⁴⁵ But in its six years of activity almost 80,000 factories were transformed by the bureau's projects.¹⁴⁶ Lighting, ventilation and noise levels were improved, wardrobes, washrooms and gymnasiums provided or remodelled, lawns and parks built surrounding the plant. Flowers, decorations and new coats of paint appeared. Factories and canteens were provided, and 'community rooms' and 'comradeship houses' were constructed in numerous plants. Architectural modernism and contemporary design were furthered in industrial construction. The German factory had indeed received a new face.

In Beauty of Labour the utopian promise of an industrial society where work was beautiful and the class struggle abolished was given political and administrative form. Its goal was the domestication of labour, to be achieved by treating the plant as a 'sphere of life', detached from the social relations that enclose the world of work and removed from the spectres of working class culture and autonomous organization. Beauty of Labour was to integrate the German worker, deprived of political and economic representation, into the 'facade' socialism of the Labour Front. As objectified ideology

it signified a critique of liberalism, in which concern for hygiene and aesthetics in the environment restored the value and meaning of work. But if Beauty of Labour presented itself as a radical break with the aesthetic deficiencies of industrialization in the liberal epoch, it solidified and strengthened its political-economic basis: management was supreme, the bureau had no power to enforce its policies – its ultimate goal was the depoliticization of industrial relations. As industrial psychology, Beauty of Labour extended the domination of material nature to the nature of the worker, whose consciousness was reduced to an environmental ‘factor’, to be transformed in the interest of productivity and habituation. As social policy Beauty of Labour subjected labour to the intervention of techniques derived from the politicized science of industrial relations of the 1920s and 1930s on an unprecedented scale.

Perhaps most important, Beauty of Labour not only integrated aesthetics into the world of production, but derived from production a technocratic aesthetic which dissolved the *völkisch* and pre-industrial imagery of pre-1933 Nazism into a new legitimation based on the autonomy of technical rationality. If Nazism did not display the veneration of machinery that characterized Italian fascism in the early 1920s, or the Soviet Union in the early 1930s, this was true only before 1936, when Germany’s condition could be attributed to the ills of modernity, and the support of the *Mittelstand* could be secured by the image of its dissolution.

As early as 1935 Ernst Bloch contrasted the widespread rejection of contemporary society by a German middle strata which ‘sought transcendence in the past’, with an exaggerated faith in the power of ‘neutral cleanliness, new architecture and its comforts, manufactured goods, technical functionalism and the standardization of products’, as a dialectic of ‘non-contemporaneity and contemporaneity’, specific to Germany’s historical development.¹⁴⁷ The shift from one extreme of this dialectic to the other took place once Nazism could no longer rely on the simple legitimacy of *völkisch* ideology and an agrarian utopia. Policies directed at the *Mittelstand* were abandoned. The expansion of technical rationality to all aspects of the production process in the Four-Year Plan was extended to ideology as well. The goal of full employment, an end to the economic crisis, and industrial supremacy and military expansion, led Nazism to abandon its ‘utopian anti-modernism’ to the institutional and ideological requirements of war production.¹⁴⁸ If Nazism’s mass support was rooted in its promise of a Germany free from the discontents of capitalism,

rationalization and the eclipse of traditional values, its historical function was to exorcize the traditional patterns of culture which conflicted with modern modes of production. In *Beauty of Labour* this shift in cultural values was objectified ideologically and administratively. Its emphasis on production and the glorification of technology as ends in themselves was affirmed by persons and principles derived from the *Neue Sachlichkeit* that swept Germany in the mid 1920s. The aestheticization of machine technology, Taylorized work-processes and efficiency provided the new requirements of the regime with a cultural *raison d'être*.

It is the image of the worker, however, that most clearly illuminates the unity that binds the extensive range of *Beauty of Labour's* efforts between 1934 and 1939. The worker, like all the subjects of National Socialism, becomes an ornament of technically preconceived and constructed environments. As objects of management and production they are subordinated to the tempo of machines: 'At machine four stands a punch operator, she activates the mechanism, moves to and fro, places plate after plate in the devouring jaws of the monster.'¹⁴⁹ The small geometric roof gardens organize workers into prescribed patterns during rest pauses; sports areas organize their physical activity; newly cleaned machines organize them for greater productivity; neat rows of washing facilities order their cleanliness. The image culminates in the neat rows of happily producing workers which adorn the factory itself. Devoid of intentionality, the workers themselves are abstractions. Unable to reflect on their own condition they are never permitted to speak in the pages of *Schönheit der Arbeit*. Nevertheless,

the fact that hygienic factory rooms and all that goes with them, Volkswagen and sport palace, ruthlessly liquidate metaphysics would be of no consequence, except that in the social totality they too become metaphysics, an ideological veil, behind which the real calamity gathers itself.¹⁵⁰

NOTES

1. 'Eine der schönsten Aufgaben des neuen Deutschlands; Dr. Ley vor den Mitarbeitern und Referenten des Amtes', *Schönheit der Arbeit*, 1:6 (October

1936), 265.

2. Ibid.

3. Albert Speer, 'Schönheit der Arbeit – fragen der Betriebsgestaltung', *Schönheit der Arbeit 1934-1936* (Berlin 1936), 198.

4. Karl Kretschmer, ' "Schönheit der Arbeit" – ein Weg zum deutschen Sozialismus!', *Wege zue neuen Sozialpolitik. Arbeitstagung der Deutschen Arbeitsfront vom 16. bis 21. Dezember 1935* (Berlin 1936), 180.

5. Anatol von Hübbenet ed. *Das Taschenbuch Schönheit der Arbeit*, (Berlin 1938), 17.

6. Tim Mason, 'Zur Entstehung des Gesetzes zur Ordnung der nationalen Arbeit, vom 20. Januar 1934: Ein Versuch über das Verhältnis "archaischer" und "moderner" Momente in der neuesten deutschen Geschichte' in Hans Mommsen, and others, ed. *Industrielles System und politische Entwicklung in der Weimarer Republik*, (Düsseldorf 1974), 325-27. See also Tim Mason, 'Labour in the Third Reich 1933-1939' in *Past and Present*, 33 (April 1966), 113-16.

7. Arthur Schweitzer, *Big Business in the Third Reich* (Bloomington 1964), 381.

8. Tim Mason, 'The Primacy of Politics – Politics and Economics in National Socialist Germany', in S. J. Woolf, ed. *The Nature of Fascism*, (London 1968), 171.

9. Hübbenet, *Taschenbuch*, op. cit., 17.

10. Albert Speer, Letter to the author, 5 July 1975. See also *Inside the Third Reich*, trans. Richard and Clara Winston (New York 1970), 94.

11. Otto Marrenbach, *Fundamente des Sieges: die Gesamtarbeit der deutschen Arbeitsfront von 1933 bis 1940* (Berlin 1940), 325.

12. Kretschmer, op. cit., 183.

13. Anatol von Hübbenet, *Die NS-Gemeinschaft Kraft durch Freude: Aufbau und Arbeit* (Berlin 1939), 25.

14. Herbert Steinwarz, *Wesen, Aufgaben und Ziele des Amtes Schönheit der Arbeit* (March 1937). Veröffentlichungen des Amtes Schönheit der Arbeit, 10.

15. Hübbenet, *Kraft durch Freude*, op. cit. 27.

16. Albert Speer, letter to the author, 5 July 1975.

17. *Der Angriff*, 6 August 1936.

18. Hübbenet, *Kraft durch Freude*, op. cit., 27.

19. Hübbenet, *Taschenbuch*, op. cit., 199, 201.

20. Ibid., 24, 27, 261.

21. Marrenbach, op. cit., 325.

22. *Erlasse, Anordnungen, Aufrufe von Partei, Staat und Wehrmacht über Schönheit der Arbeit* (December 1937), 13.

23. Ibid., 17.

24. *Amtliches Nachrichtenblatt der Deutschen Arbeitsfront und der Nationalsozialistischen Gemeinschaft 'Kraft durch Freude'*, 2 Jg., Folge 1, 11 January 1936.

25. For example *Gute Beleuchtung am Arbeitsplatz* (October, 1935); *Schönheit der Arbeit im Büro* (July 1936); *Sport im Betrieb* (December 1936).

26. Hübbenet, *Taschenbuch*, op. cit., 74.

27. *Amtliches Nachrichtenblatt*, op. cit., 19 January 1938.

28. Bundesarchiv Koblenz, Deutsche Arbeitsfront, Sozialamt NS51/3-4,

Freizeitlager der Hitler-Jugend, 26 June, 1936.

29. *Ämtliches Nachrichtenblatt*, op. cit., 11 January 1936.
30. *Erlasse*, op. cit., 37.
31. *Wohn- und Tagesunterkünfte für Bauarbeiter* (Berlin 1940); Marrenbach, *Fundamente*, 322.
32. *Schönheit der Arbeit*, op. cit., vol. 1, no. 6. (October 1936), 267.
33. Hübbenet, *Taschenbuch*, op. cit., 23.
34. 'Bilder aus dem Farbentrickfilm "Musterbetrieb AG"' in *Schönheit der Arbeit*, op. cit., (October 1936), 299.
35. Hübbenet, *Taschenbuch*, op. cit., 257.
36. Kretschmer, 'Schönheit', op. cit., 180.
37. Mason, 'Labour', op. cit., 121.
38. 'Das Antlitz der Arbeit zwischen gestern und heute', *Schönheit der Arbeit*, vol. 1, no. 6, (October 1936), 290.
39. Hübbenet, *Taschenbuch*, op. cit., 26.
40. *Schönheit der Arbeit 1934-1936*, n.p.
41. Marrenbach, op. cit., 325.
42. 'Eine Parfümeriefabrik', *Schönheit der Arbeit*, vol. 2, no. 6, (October 1937), 253.
43. Hübbenet, *Taschenbuch*, op. cit., 185, 187.
44. 'A new spirit – a new outward appearance!', *Schönheit der Arbeit*, op. cit, vol. 1, no. 3, (July, 1936), 126. This issue appeared in English, French and German for international consumption.
45. 'Sporthalle im Werk', *Schönheit der Arbeit*, op. cit, vol. 2, no. 9, II:9 (January 1938), 380.
46. *5 Jahre Kraft durch Freude; Leistungsbericht der NS-Gemeinschaft 'Kraft durch Freude'*, November 1938, 9, 28.
47. *Arbeitertum*, Folge 23 (1 March 1935), 1.
48. Ludwig Heyde, *Die Lage des deutschen Arbeiters* (Berlin 1940), 56.
49. Wilhelm Lotz, *Schönheit der Arbeit in Deutschland* (Berlin 1940), 61.
50. *Schönheit der Arbeit*, op. cit., vol. 1, no. 3, I:3 (July 1936), 106.
51. Speer, 'Schönheit', op. cit., 198.
52. Charles Fourier, *Design for Utopia*, trans. Julia Franklin (New York 1971), 164.
53. Ernst Bloch, *Freiheit und Ordnung; Abriss der Sozialutopien* (Hamburg 1969), 168.
54. Lewis Mumford, *The Culture of Cities* (New York 1938), 393. A more convincing political interpretation of these attempts to improve the industrial landscape is provided by Leonardo Benevolo, *The Origins of Modern Town Planning*, 130-47; See also Enid Gauldie, *Cruel Habitations; A History of Working-Class Housing 1790-1918* (New York 1974), 191-95.
55. A Heinrichsbauer, *Industrielle Siedlung im Ruhrgebiet* (Essen 1936), 67. The publication of this book established the continuity between Nazi industrial policy and the 'pioneering' work of Alfred Krupp.
56. Heinrich Tessenow, *Hausbau und dergleichen* (München 1916), 110.
57. *Ibid.*, 8.
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