I begin with a fable, curiously titled The Story of Brigands, written by Brancusi sometime before 1925, when it was published in This Quarter magazine:

Long ago—very, very, very long ago, when men didn’t know how animals come into the world. . . . One day in those days, a man found a chicken incubating her eggs. And since in those days animals and men understood each other, he asked her what she was doing. And since the chicken was nice—because in those days animals had a lot of respect for men—Ah! much, much, much more than now—she got up in order not to leave a man standing, and went to him to explain. And she explained for a long time, a long time, so that when she returned to her eggs, they were already spoiled.

That is why in our time chickens who are sitting on their eggs are angry enough to spit in our eye!

The moral of this story is obvious: it is that artists take a dim view of explanations, and often have to defend themselves from the stupidities of their commentators. Picasso, for example, when pestered by critics about the influence of African sculpture on his work, answered, “L’art nègre? connais pas” (African art? Never heard of it).

By the time Brancusi jotted down his fable, he had had ample experience with pests wanting explanations, and some experience with interpretations that enraged him. I think that his profound respect for intuition and his conviction that, as he wrote on one of his scribbled notes, “When one is in the sphere of the beautiful, no explanations are needed,” are fundamental to our understanding of his work. What is more, all explanations seem gratuitous when in the presence of his best works.

Yet, even Brancusi had recourse to words, which are, after all,
necessary for explanation. Far from being the unlettered, divinely inspired peasant he was imagined to be by some of his critics, he listened attentively to the words of his early friends such as Guillaume Apollinaire, and read the works of others. When, for instance, his sculpture Princess X was attacked for obscenity, he angrily explained—yes, explained—that his endeavor could be compared to Goethe's principle of the Eternal Feminine. Not, certainly, an unsophisticated remark.

Just as Brancusi's oeuvre is complex, varied, and far more experimental than is usually granted, he himself had a complicated temperament. In the often oversimplified history of post-World War I artistic trends, two quite opposing strands of thought and feeling are usually discerned: a new preoccupation with classicism, and a new preoccupation with all that is not classic—all that is explosive, anti-rational, and even corrosive. Brancusi was already a prominent personage, and was seen by many, such as the British aesthete Clive Bell in 1926, to be "as pure an artist as Bach or Poussin." But there was a powerful impulse toward iconoclasm in Brancusi. He was a vigorous contestant in a fateful game, and he knew the value of what the French call drôle de type (strange type)—eccentric challengers of just about all received ideas. His closest friends comprised a procession of outspoken droll types. When the Dada movement arrived in Paris in the person of Tristan Tzara, who was a fellow Romanian, Brancusi was quick to respond, even saying in one of his fragments of writing underneath a drawing on the Socrates theme, "Dada will bring us the things of our time." Tzara was a frequent visitor, and sent little notes to Brancusi's address in the Impasse Ronsin signing himself "Tzara with open eyes." Brancusi was also friendly with Blaise Cendrars, another rollicking writer, full of tall tales, and, of course, with the arch-exception, Marcel Duchamp. One of his oddest friendships was with the very young iconoclast, Cocteau's protégé Raymond Radiguet, whose rebelliousness was paradoxical: he attacked what he called "le conformisme anti-conformiste" (the conformism of anticonformists). Brancusi was himself no stranger to paradox. In one of his notes he referred to forms that were "relatively absolute."
Brancusi's attraction to these *drôle de types* does not cancel his own proclivity for idealism, or principle. An anecdote related by Mlle. Pogany, who had posed for Brancusi for almost two months during the winter of 1910, illustrates this point. There were occasions when Brancusi created a clay bust so admirable that she implored him to keep it. But, she wrote, "he only laughed and threw it back into the boxful of clay that stood in the corner of the studio." Eventually, Brancusi completed Mlle. Pogany's portrait in several variations and materials spanning twenty years of meditation, beginning perhaps with *Muse* (1912). I take it he was seeking not the likeness of her face but the principle—the idea at the very origin of identity. Principle is finally a mysterious combination of faith and reason.

One of Brancusi's most fruitful associations with a notable eccentric was his close friendship with composer Eric Satie, also, finally, a man of principle, a faithful adherent to Plato's theory of ideal forms. Brancusi enjoyed his conversations with Satie, a unique man whose everyday banter was always amusing. Brancusi used to quote him laughingly, as when he disparaged snobbism and officialdom in the art world: "Getting the Légion d'Honneur means nothing in itself. The main thing is not to deserve it."

But that was only one side of their relationship. The other, and far more significant, was the meeting of similar spirits. Satie, beneath his banter, was a profoundly searching spirit who had taken upon himself the task of purging music of all but its innermost form. His admirer, Jean Cocteau, in his 1918 essay on modern music, *Le Coq et l'Arlequin*, wrote that Satie "cleans, simplifies and strips rhythm naked." The following year, Brancusi and Satie were introduced and saw a great deal of each other, as each was working around the figure of Socrates. Satie's Platonism can be found in his remark to himself: "Do not forget that melody is the Idea, the contour, just as much as it is the form and content of the work." In his comments on Satie's *Socrate*, Roger Shattuck says: "The aesthetic of 'Socrate' is one of chaste, unembellished subordination of music to text...one note to each syllable." He sees it as Satie's "approach to immobility and repetitiousness." *Socrate*, I imagine, is Satie's expression of the principle
of infinity, just as the various Mlle. Pogany portraits can be seen formally as infinity signs.

Amid jokes and banter, both Satie and Brancusi were seriously engaged in symbolizing the figure of Socrates. As early as 1917, Brancusi had carved a symbolic cup and placed it atop one of his endless
columns and, with the Child sculpture, called it a “mobile group.” By 1922, he had photographed his sculpture Socrates surmounted by his cup, presumably of poison. Brancusi’s cup, like all of his works, can be perceived from many points of view, and can serve as a vessel of his concerns. It is a fundamental form derived from the geometric imagination at work in many of his pieces: a half sphere, in which the challenge to a sculptor resides in its equilibrium as it touches the ground only at a single point. At the same time, since it is carved in wood, it is Brancusi’s acknowledgment of an organic essence with its own weight and grain. It also suggests something of the normal function of the cup, as we know from Brancusi’s letter to John Quinn, inviting him to accept the cup as a gift to keep in his dining room. For Brancusi, the cup metamorphosed from a homely adornment for a rich man’s dining room to a grave philosophic metaphor.

Socrates (Fig. 1) is hewn rather roughly from wood, and we know from Isamu Noguchi that Brancusi knew wood intimately, and that when he wielded his axe he could “come down heavily, exposing with its sharpness the grain as though polished.” We can see the gesture in Socrates, where Brancusi cuts deep and sure, and in which the circular hollow is visibly hewn to reveal the grain. In one of his notes to himself, Brancusi characterized Socrates, saying “The whole universe flows through. Nothing escapes the great thinker.” The notion of flowing is caught in the circular void, but also in the grain of the wood.

Brancusi had a long history with wood, since he came from a place where wood was abundant and where carving was a rural pastime. But he had also begun his training in an Arts and Crafts school where handling wood, for furniture and decorative purposes, was part of the curriculum. After that, he had a perfectly academic training, where he learned how to model clay for bronze casting, and, probably even before he arrived in Paris in 1904, was familiar with Rodin’s ideas, by that time widely broadcast in Europe. It is often said that from the beginning he rejected Rodin (even though he spent an entire month as Rodin’s assistant in Meudon before he struck out on his own). But Rodin, looking back to Michelangelo,
spoke of form emerging. That is, drawn by the artist from the rough block, exposing the duality of art and craft, nature and culture. Brancusi tried his hand at this method in *Sleep* (1908), said to be his first direct carving in marble. He had clearly derived an important lesson from Rodin: the form is within the block and the artist must reveal it. Brancusi’s aesthetic was not, in fact, so far from Rodin’s. It was Rodin, after all, who said, “Each profile is actually the outer evidence of the interior mass; each is the perceptible surface of a deep section from which the final surface emanated.”

Naturally, since Brancusi had his own point of view, his search for the inner structure in each piece of wood or marble would arrive at a very different place. If you look at many statements by both painters and sculptors from around 1905 to World War II, you will find in the French a certain word constantly repeated: the word “dépouiller,” which means to strip, to lay bare. Brancusi obviously set about stripping bare, stripping down to essential forms, soon after he arrived in Paris. He early expressed his contempt for certain nineteenth-century habits of modeling, especially in clay, and reserved great disdain for Michelangelo, and, at times, Rodin, calling their works *biftek*. For instance, in an interview in London, in 1925, he said “Michelangelo’s sculpture is nothing but muscle, beefsteak; beefsteak run amok.” According to Noguchi, Brancusi used the word *biftek* frequently to refer to sculptors he didn’t like and their work. We can assume, then, that hardness—a fundamental characteristic of wood and stone—was, as a matter of principle, something with which he could contend. And he was contentious.

Brancusi liked to begin at the beginning—as he said, he placed himself within nature and sought to experience, through nature’s creations such as wood and stone, the metamorphosis within each material. We know from his many photographs of his studios that he treasured great timbers and great blocks of stone. What commentators tend to forget is that the process of creating an image, a sculpture, begins with the quest outside of the studio. Both Brancusi and his admirer Noguchi visited quarries and timber yards. The initial act is not the cut, but the choosing. The divining. A stone sculptor, for
example, tries to divine the inner crystals and veins as he gazes at a block of stone or a quarry wall. A wood sculptor does the same, divining the direction of the wood grain and its irregular patterns. And all this, they never forget, has been wrought by nature—by winds and
waters and climate. Time. Furthermore, they think with their hands, that is, their tools. The heft of a tool and the sharpness of a blade is always with them. As they gaze at the virgin block of timber, they bring an almost visceral calculation with them. Brancusi made his own tools for good reason. The point for him was that these substances—limestone, marble, cherry, oak—have pasts. For artists as for writers the past is essential and, above all, alive. As Hannah Arendt so often said, quoting William Faulkner: “The past is never dead. It is not even past.” So for Brancusi the process was to reveal, and in so doing, make visually poetic metaphors. The question became for him: how much could be condensed to create a vital image?

The partial answer can be visually assessed in the sequence of torsos in marble, revealing in every sense. Each torso is a summary, a distillation. The earliest suggests Rodin's adaptation of ancient Greek fragments in marble about which the poet Rilke was so eloquent. Meditating on Rodin's achievement, Rilke wrote: “The object is definite, the art object must be even more definite: withdrawn from all chance, removed from all obscurity, lifted out of time and given to space, it has become lasting, capable of eternity. The model seems, the art object is.” Rilke exhorted himself, “Somewhere I too must manage to make things... realities that proceed from handwork. Somehow I, too, must discover the smallest basic element, the cell of my art.” Later, he would say of Cézanne and his idea of realization: “The convincing quality, the becoming a thing; the reality heightened into the indestructible through his own experience of the object.” I cite these lines by a consummate poet because I think Brancusi’s way of creating is closely related. Like the poet, he was searching for the ideal form that is definitively removed from all chance and, in its infinite reduction, or what Matisse used to call distillation, becomes a new metaphor. A very difficult idea, I’m afraid, and not given to easy explanation. When Samuel Beckett wrote about his master, James Joyce, he said that Joyce’s writing “is not about something. It is the thing itself.”

The earliest stone torsos were somewhat about something, but
his *Torso of a Young Girl*, carved a decade later, is something, something complete within itself (Fig. 2). For this wonderful sculpture, Brancusi chose a kind of stone with special properties. Onyx is a crystalline stone, whose inner facets of light—the light that the crystal emanates—glimmer and, when polished judiciously, have the glow of life itself as exemplified by the elements—skin and curves—perceived in the persona of a young girl. Brancusi has succeeded in reducing her features to the quality of roundness, the Idea of roundness—breasts, buttocks, and belly subsumed in a perfection of curviness, and skin itself becoming light from within, and without. His
accomplice is matter, the stone itself, which is why, I suppose, sculptors often refer to living stone.

The decision to elicit both the life and the Idea of life can be enacted only by perseverance, a signal quality in Brancusi. In the same period as the torsos of the young girl, he carved from veined marble the Young Bird, again conflating several essential characteristics of his subject to reveal its fundamental character. (The word “character” comes from the ancient act of incising, or cutting a figure in a clay tablet—cutting into to make a sign.) There is the sound quality: Young Bird has a sheared plane symbolizing a cry—as we know from earlier marble characterizations of the newborn human infant—and it has the general form of birdness, that is, the rounded breast that the nineteenth-century writer Michelet admired, saying that the bird is the only creature that creates its environment—its curved nest—with the action of its breast. A hollow echo, or an echoing hollow, in fact; or, a metaphor. To accent the bird’s smallness, its infancy, Brancusi builds a complicated and bulky base so that we are presented with the fragile creature at eye level, but peripherally we are aware of the concreteness, even the earthboundness, of the bird’s environment. Another good example of Brancusi’s diligent search for the most telling characteristic is his carving of the Torso of a Young Boy, which is an admirable abstraction from a fact of nature—a piece of wood with its branching members—and a commentary on specific youthfulness: the lean erect torso and limbs of an adolescent, straight as a plumb line, irreducible in space. The Idea of a boy.

But we must not carry the idea of Idea too far. Brancusi’s knowledge of the history of sculpture was ample, and, as a youth in the academy, he had copied the head of the famous Laocoön. The gesture of torment, head cringing into the shoulder, appeared in Brancusi’s own early characterizations called Torment, which metamorphosed into ovals slightly canting toward a base. The idea of torment took many forms subsequently, and appeared in a sculpture he pointedly titled Prometheus (Fig. 3). We have an amusing account by James Johnson Sweeney, a friend and connoisseur of Brancusi, who was struck with his first vision of Prometheus:
I saw no evident link between it [the sculpture], and the Fire Bringer or his eagle. On looking into the classical dictionary, I found that his mother was Clymene the Oceanid. Immediately I felt on track: here, a marble head, almost featureless, that of a child born in the sea, washed up in the shingle. But when I asked Brancusi, he explained simply that it was the head of suffering Prometheus. “If it is properly set you see how it falls on his shoulder as the eagle devoured his liver.”

There is an important phrase here: if properly set. We always talk about sculpture in the round, and how we must perceive it from many angles while walking around the object, and how sculpture creates and is created by space, and so on. But Brancusi talked about how his work must be properly set: in other words, there is an ideal viewing point from which the Idea of the form becomes self-evident.

For instance, while the Young Bird was set on a weighty base—its relative condition as a fledgling not yet able to fly emphasized by the full roundness and weight meeting the limestone plinth—the many versions of Bird in Space (perhaps his best-known work) were always set on smallish bases to emphasize the vertical soaring motion of the sculpture (Fig. 4). As Brancusi said in the catalogue of the 1933 Brummer exhibition in New York, it was “A project of a bird, that once it is enlarged, will fill the sky.” In other statements, he didn’t say “sky,” but “vault of heaven,” lending an almost architectural quality to his ambition. As is repeatedly pointed out, Brancusi perceived these many attempts to arrive at the optimal shape of a flying creature as attempts to embody the sensation of flying in matter. Matter is respected, but by the act of carving and polishing, will be transcended. When Brancusi was still hopeful about realizing his project for the Maharajah of Indore in the early 1930s—the first of his total projects that envisioned both sculptural and architectural elements—he wrote to the Maharajah: “My Birds are a series of different objects on a central unchanging theme. The ideal realization of this theme would be an enlarged work filling the vault of the sky. . . . The more I’ve succeeded in ridding myself of myself, the closer I’ve gotten to it.” Many art historians have mentioned
Brancusi's attraction to Buddhism, and particularly the Tibetan monk Milarepa, whom he read attentively. Unquestionably the "central theme" Brancusi referred to can be considered from a spiritual point of view—that is, the desire to transcend earthly concerns. But the
phrase “ridding myself of myself” expresses a desire familiar to many artists. There are numerous testimonies to an experience of self-transcendence among artists who have tried to explain the creative process. There comes a moment in the struggle to give form to feeling when the intense absorption in the task works to set the artist free, to bring him beyond his self. Brancusi always craved that experience, and I think his perseverance—that is, his returning again and again to a central unchanging theme—was a quest for the ideal moment of freedom, freedom from the necessity imposed by gravity, from velleities of daily life, from the indeterminate. Soaring, after all, is the essence of freedom. Brancusi’s recourse to metaphor is always related to this quest. In one of his written notes he said of himself: “Like a light object that one puts into the deep ocean, I have had to make my way up like a blind man, not knowing why and struggling against all currents and obstacles to reach the surface.” In relation to the birds in space, we have evidence offered by Noguchi, who, when he entered Brancusi’s studio as a dedicated apprentice, was witness to the master’s making plaster replicas from stone birds, then sending them to be cast after having worked the plaster, and then beginning once again to polish the castings to make entirely new objects. This may be an example of what Brancusi meant when he said he struggled against all currents and obstacles.

There is yet another bird that Brancusi sought to characterize, only this bird, the Gallic cock, is known to us through synthesis: it is not the bird itself that rises but his cry, a sound become thing. Each time Brancusi fashioned this vivid symbol, often in carved plaster in his studio, the sound was offered in variations, much as Satie’s single sounds are multiplied into musical composition, or melody in which slight modulations are the sole indication of its finally melodic and composed character. The forest of plaster cocks seen in so many of Brancusi’s own photographs of his studio are haunting reminders of Brancusi’s ability to orchestrate his own environment (Fig. 5). In them the senses are alerted to the musical properties or the rhythms implicit in his life’s work. Those triangular cuts, marching up triumphantly, sound into the sky. In the studio photography of around
1945 or 1946, they arise above, and their rhythms are repeated, probably not accidentally, in the triangular cuts and ridges of the magnificent wood sculpture of the King of Kings. I could always hear the clatter of primitive washboard music on the king’s torso. And as for
the coeks, Brancusi’s fellow artist, Jean Arp, wrote a little verse about them that quite perfectly covers the subject, beginning with the lines

The cock crowed co-co-rico and each
Sound made a zig or a zag in his neck.

We know from the numerous biographies that Brancusi loved music, had once built a violin for himself, had a huge collection of records of folk music from all over the world, including spirituals recorded in the United States, and, according to anecdote, played duets with his friend Satie. Noguchi described a phonograph that Brancusi had built for himself with the novel feature of two arms. More important, perhaps, is the historical fact that the word “musicality,” from the days of Delacroix, had entered the lexicon of visual art to designate a tendency toward abstraction. I have no doubt that Brancusi hearkened to an inner rhythm as he worked, as fundamental as the fact that each person walks in an idiosyncratic rhythm, and that folk dances, which Brancusi was said to have relished performing, spring from organic responses as simple as the beat of the heart. This difficult issue of rhythm has to do with Brancusi’s work techniques and with his idealism. When he was working on his wood version of the Endless Column, the box frame saw was thrust back and forth in a definite rhythm; otherwise, it would not have functioned well for him. And his act of polishing a bronze casting of one of his birds also had its rhythms, as Noguchi’s suggestive words tell us: “The long file had to go its full length, curving over its roundness.”

The most apparent use of rhythm is of course in the motif that has accumulated the most commentary—the Endless Column (Fig. 6). In this absolute, or perhaps Brancusi would have said, comparatively absolute, conception, the erect chain of polyhedrons meant to pierce the vault of the heavens has incited many musical comparisons. Brancusi himself referred to his column as a “song.” Perhaps “hymn” is the right word, for in the ensemble at Tirgu Jiu there are symbolic relationships that call upon a philosophic schema of the universe and its center, in which the column climbing upward
becomes an axis mundi. "The endless column" Brancusi wrote, "is like a timeless song that lifts us into infinity."

This timeless song inspired many sculptors in the twentieth century. The earliest significant tribute was written by the British sculptor Barbara Hepworth who, after a visit to Brancusi's studio in 1932, wrote:
The quiet, earthbound shapes of human heads or elliptical fish, soaring forms of birds, or the great eternal column of wood, emphasized the complete unity of form and material. . . . I think Brancusi’s understanding of these timeless elements in sculpture is very close to Stravinsky’s understanding of rhythm.

I’m sure Hepworth had in mind the thumping rhythms of *The Rite of Spring*, at whose 1913 premiere Brancusi might very well have been present. Satie’s rhythms, although a hundred times lighter than Stravinsky’s, were also organized on a similar plane. I can well understand why curator Carmen Gimenez organized her thoughts around the principle of musicality. In her introductory essay in the catalogue for a Brancusi exhibition at the Guggenheim Museum, Gimenez says “his sculpture extends like an unending melodic line,” and, in an inspired simile, speaks of how “each piece occupies both its own place and projects itself by means of its aura as an animated ‘ghost sonata.’” She was talking about a visual phenomenon that patinaed sculptural surfaces isolate, and that, to use Paul Klee’s phrase, makes the invisible visible.

I turn now to a different kind of specialist—sculptors who have reported on their tremendous experience of Brancusi’s masterwork, the ensemble at Tirgu Jiu. The late Christopher Wilmarth, a major twentieth-century American sculptor, who even as a student revered Brancusi, made a special pilgrimage to Romania in 1974 to see the masterpiece with his own eyes. He went, he told me, in order to see “a true place.” He said the *Endless Column* was the greatest public sculpture in existence, pointing out that “it is never the same in any light; it changes constantly; it seems to penetrate the sky.” It is, Wilmarth said, an “ascension piece” and “quivers like the image of a spirit.” In his own early work, it is clear that the geometric elements in Brancusi’s work, such as the half-sphere and the circle, were carefully assessed, and their simplicity captured in the first of his wood and glass wall pieces. Later, some five years after the voyage to Romania, Wilmarth was still pondering Brancusi’s principles and methods and effects, when he embarked on a remarkable project:
the illumination of the sonnets of Mallarmé. There, the predominant image is an ovoid shape, often an emblem of the human visage. In the glass-and-bronze relief, *When Winter on Forgotten Woods Moves Somber*, the oval is pierced with an inner oval, much as Socrates' head was an opening through which the universe flowed. In another in this series, *Insert Myself Within Your Story*, the luminescent oval is both suspended and perforated by a dark steel rectangular element, invoking dualities that are omnipresent in Brancusi's work as well: hard and soft, dark and light, material and ethereal. Wilmarth's intense preoccupation with making a "place," a true place, as in the case of Brancusi, led him to make many experiments with series of works. These he always exhibited with great care so that the viewer, the vertical person, felt englobed by an ideal space. For him, the way his works were "set," to use Brancusi's term, was always of signal importance.

The other specialist is the still living and remarkable sculptor, William Tucker, who also made a pilgrimage to Tirgu Jiu around 1972, and reported on the experience at length in his book, *Early Modern Sculpture*. Although Tucker's writings on Brancusi are, so to speak, objective—that is, he is evaluating Brancusi as a major twentieth-century sculptor in an historical context—he cannot conceal his awe, his immense emotional response to the *Endless Column*, and declares finally that "If there is one piece in the history of modern sculpture which in every respect deserves the title 'masterpiece,' it is surely the Tirgu Jiu *Endless Column*." His observations about the column are consonant with those of many others who have marveled at the perceptual transformations Brancusi anticipates—how in a certain light, the elements appear to be a fully modeled spiral, or in another light, a pure vertical plumb line, or, in still another, a series of ellipses.

But I imagine Tucker's response was tempered by his earliest investigations of Brancusi, while still a student. He would have paged through the books and seen the dramatic photographs of the earliest *Endless Column* in the garden of the photographer Steichen—a great hewn tree-trunk that Brancusi transformed—and later
photographs of the many trial columns, with differing numbers of elements, and also hewn in wood by the master's own hand. Photographs of the Impasse Ronsin, often reproduced, show Brancusi boarding house timbers to be worked eventually—great, trued lengths of wood, sometimes retrieved from demolitions, sometimes from lumberyards.

When I first visited Tucker, before he settled in the United States and while he was working in London, I saw his narrow garden timbers, tarred and weathered, clearly retrieved from long-ago demolitions. After his return from Romania, Tucker did a remarkable series of sculptures derived from heavy oaken timbers, Portraits of K and House in 1975, and, six years later, the powerful House of the Hanged Man. Aside from an oblique allusion to Cézanne (and some commentators have likened Brancusi's work to Cézanne's), there is an oblique allusion to Brancusi in the notched interior members and the illusion induced by an irregular geometric conformation. The long side of the triangle sweeps up from a certain angle and continues beyond the crest. Then, there is a mysteriousness that does not lend itself to easy explanation, just as there is in Brancusi's oeuvre. These continuities in art history exist, and are mysteries, phantoms.

Even the repetitions in Brancusi, which some critics have thought to have inspired so-called minimalists such as Donald Judd, have served in markedly different ways the two specialists, Tucker and Wilmarth, who to my mind are Brancusi's true heirs. Cocteau had written, with Stravinsky in mind, that the same chord, often repeated, is less fatiguing to the ear than the frequent repetitions of a single gesture are to the eye. To which the composer Ned Rorem replied: "Yes, but is the same chord really the same, since each repetition occurs within a constantly shifting, asymmetrical rhythm, and the chord's 'meaning' shifts accordingly?" This, I think, sums up the Endless Column's meaning—the repeated elements, having been modeled before casting, would have been bound to have slight shifts in meaning—and sums up its enduring, miraculous presence in our own time.