

# Meyer Schapiro on style in art and science:

Notes from a Theory and Methods of Art History graduate seminar lecture course, Columbia University, New York, 1973

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## Introduction

Why present this material now, nearly forty years after the fact? Indeed, why make available what is after all simply a set of lecture notes, one amongst the many taken by the hundreds who heard Meyer Schapiro lecture on these topics over the decades of his teaching?

A short answer to the first question is that, while these notes inevitably contain ideas and observations that appear in the considerable number of Schapiro's books, collected essays and posthumous publications, they also contain many thoughts, comments, formulations and speculations that are not to be found in those volumes. This does not, of course, in itself guarantee their value or interest, and certainly there is no suggestion that they represent material that he might have wished to see published. Nor, on the other hand, is there any reason known to me that he would not have wanted them to be made available as what they are: one record of his lecture series on art historical methodology, as presented in 1973.

Allowing of course for the limitations of the recorder, they provide a distinct access to the mind of the most theoretically alive American art historian of his generation, a man passionately devoted to the task of communicating the excitement of the discipline of art history as it confronts the most challenging problems of its time, and thinks itself forward by working through them. This commitment is evident in some of the published collections of his writings, but not the sense—striking in these notes—of Schapiro consumed by his task as he strives to induct a group of students into the fundamental drives of the discipline. More particularly, in the years around 1970 Schapiro was deeply concerned with the connections and differences between modes of inquiry into art's history and into the history and philosophy of science, and those between artistic creativity and scientific enquiry, including information theory. These concerns are, I believe, more apparent in these notes than in the material published to date.

Whether these notes stand as a useful record is a judgement that only each reader can make. In general, I have altered my original notes only when I had misspelled or misunderstood a name, or used intolerably poor grammar, or unnecessarily abbreviated his remarks. To compensate a little for my extremely utilitarian style of note taking, and to assist the flow of reading, I have added definite articles and conjunctions. I have nowhere changed any word of significance, or added any words that might bear on meaning. To assist the reader, I have proposed titles [in

square brackets] for those lectures when Schapiro did not announce one. Taking down as exactly and efficiently as possible, and for later contemplation, the sense of what I heard him to say was, after all, the point of my being there in the first place.

I have added in the footnotes full references to the many texts that he mentioned, usually in passing. I have tried to locate editions that he would have been likely to read. They are testimony not only to the depth and range of his erudition, but also to his openness to contemporary publishing in a variety of fields, to texts both arcane and populist. I have not incorporated any material from Schapiro's published work, although endnote reference to these volumes is made when that seems appropriate. Most of the published material, as it happens, is based on texts written before 1973. Schapiro had lectured on the topics covered in these notes since 1963, did so for the years 1974 and 1975 in systematic series, and subsequently returned to many of these topics in lectures on a variety of subjects. My sense at the time—and I still believe this—is that the lectures constituting Art History G6001x, given to a class of, at first, over 70 (mine was seat #72) but by the end, regrettably, perhaps a dozen graduate students, were Schapiro's theory-in-progress seminars. He would bring into the lecture room a set of catalog cards on which he had written some notes and references, as well as, occasionally, a handful of slides. The cards would be released from their rubber band, shuffled, one chosen for a glance that would trigger ten or more minutes of free-flowing discourse, then the process would be repeated throughout the hour, sometimes an hour and a half. The notes that follow, then, provide a window into Schapiro the scholar-teacher during a few months of 1973; mostly serious, sometimes playful but always inspiring, and above all wise, as he works to demonstrate what it is to interpret art accurately and passionately, what it is to do art history well, and how art historical inquiry might take its place as one of the great systems for thinking through the questions thrown at us by the world we live in. So, while I could offer some speculations as to why many of Schapiro's preoccupations of 1973 have particular relevance to us now, this glimpse of him in action is the best answer to my opening question.

A few remarks on the person who, in the early months of 1973, took these notes. Obviously, the concerns and competencies of the translator inflect any translation. I took this course, for registration credit, because the Institute of Fine Arts at New York University, where I was enrolled in the graduate program, was unable to offer courses in methodology. My adviser, Robert Goldwater, recognizing my need, arranged for me to take Schapiro's course. I had come from the University of Sydney on a Harkness Fellowship to undertake further work on my Masters thesis, "Abstract Expressionism: Ethical Attitudes and Moral Function." I took courses at the Institute from Goldwater (modern sculpture), William Rubin (Painting since Pollock) and Robert Rosenblum (American painting and the North European Romantic tradition). Rosenblum also supervised my major paper (on de Kooning's Picasso sources). Schapiro found this repertoire rather limited, and invited me to take his course on Romanesque art. During this period I was also drawn into the work of the New York branch of the Art & Language group: this, along with writing my thesis, became the main focus of my activity for the next few years.

Before coming to New York, I had graduated in art history from the Fine Arts Department at the University of Melbourne, where I had been taught by representatives of three major art historical traditions: Professor Sir Joseph Burke (connoisseurship), Franz Philipp (Wiener Schule iconography) and Dr Bernard Smith (Marxist art history). I had also written art criticism for national newspapers and weeklies, edited a contemporary art journal, curated some controversial exhibitions, and taught in the first years of the Power Institute at the University of Sydney. My criticism was profoundly influenced by formalism, but was in crisis after the doubts induced by Clement Greenberg's visit to Sydney to give the 1968 Power Lecture "Avant-Garde Attitudes," perhaps his least successful statement.

All of these factors, it seems to me now, colored my note taking, but the influence of my daily work within the Art & Language group is strongest. At that time, in an effort to model our own artistic practice, we were reading intensely in philosophy (Analytic, especially Wittgenstein), linguistics (especially formal logics and natural language theory) and history and philosophy of science (Kuhn, Lakatos and Feyerabend). So, while it is obvious from the content of Schapiro's lectures that he was, at the time, deeply interested in the history and philosophy of science (to the extent that, were I asked to give the lecture series an indicative title, it would be "Style in Art and Science"), the degree of emphasis on this connection in these notes may also reflect a strong, coincidental convergence between lecturer and note-taker. Something of this emerges in the questions that I asked, although not always in the answers given. (Schapiro sometimes broke off the lecture to ask for questions. I was a regular hand-raiser.) The relatively flat tone of this text is, however, mine, not his. Because I was concentrating on tracing the structure of his arguments, and the details of the content of his statements, the easy grace and pragmatic clarity that characterized his speaking style, as it does his writing, is sacrificed.

In some passages, the note taking is more schematic than in others. One reason for this is that I had, prior to taking the course, read certain of Schapiro's key writings. At Melbourne University in 1967, Franz Philipp had included the essay on "Style" in his honors aesthetics course (this consisted of one semester comparing a variety of interpretations of *Las Meninas*, and a second reading *Art and Illusion* word by word), and the essay on Cézanne's apples was on the reading list for Bernard Smith's course on modern art. The "Style" essay I read chiefly for its summaries of the views of authors whose books were difficult to find in Australia, but I vividly recall being struck by Schapiro's concluding challenge: that a theory of style adequate to psychoanalysis and social responsibility was yet to be formulated. My conclusion at the time was that such a quest was essential to art history as a discipline, but was doomed if it remained subservient to the concept of style *per se*. If, however, art historical methodology as a whole took on this challenge, along with those raised by the meta-conceptualization of all of its terms of analysis, then it could, I believed, be revived as a discipline—as a theoretical practice, engaged with contemporary art and issues.

These attitudes doubtless colored my note taking. I shared with Schapiro a loathing for formalism, and a disappointment in the timidity of orthodox iconography. Perhaps, as well, we shared a certain anger (or in his, more mature, case, a sadness) toward current art history's failure to live up to the achievement and the challenges left by its modern founders. All of these factors, and the example of Schapiro as someone thinking himself through and out from these challenges, are evident my first exercise in art history: theory and method, "Doing Art History," *The Fox*, #2, 1975.

Finally, this effort to transform my miniscule scribbles in a Columbia University notebook into a form now universally accessible is, for me, above all else a small gesture towards repaying a debt. Meyer Schapiro, arguably the leading member of the profession in the United States, took an interest in a young man from Sydney, not only by admitting me to an already overflowing course, but, most weeks, inviting me to sit with him in his office and chat while he was preparing his thoughts for the lecture to come. He also took the trouble to read my jejune thesis draft, comment encouragingly on it, and introduce me to the living protagonists of my researches. In all respects, he set an example that we can only aspire to follow.

This restorative work was mostly done during my period as Getty Scholar at the Getty Research Institute, Los Angeles, during the Fall of 2001. I thank the Institute, the library staff and especially my assistant Christina Wegel. I returned to the text in 2010-11 while at the University of Pittsburgh, with the able assistance of Nadav Hochman. When the Schapiro papers were made available in the Archival Collections of the Columbia University Libraries in 2010 I examined those bearing on these lectures with a view to checking the accuracy of my own notes, and that of the references I had unearthed. The note cards were there, covered with Schapiro's feathery, elusive handwriting, in files dating from the 1960s onwards. Specifically, there are sets of annotated transcripts relating to the versions of this course offered in 1963-4, 1969, 1974 and 1975. For most years, these are accompanied by his notes taken while reading the books referred to, and by notes of thoughts to be developed. For the spring of 1973, however, annotated typescripts are not present in the files, and may not have been made. This adds some archival value to my notes. The 1974 and 1975 series, retitled "Theories and Methods in the Investigation of Art" (as, erroneously, were the 1973 files) were recorded, and the tapes transcribed under the supervision of Mrs Schapiro. Professor Schapiro reviewed them, according to a note in the files. The annotated transcripts differ from my notes not only in that the lectures changed somewhat each year as new material appeared and Professor Schapiro developed further his thoughts on each topic, but also in that they do manifest the quasi-conversational style in which he lectured. My notes, on the other hand, were as I have said focused exclusively on my getting down the ideas as I heard them.

For a useful finding aid to these materials, see [http://findingaids.cul.columbia.edu/ead/nnc-rb/ldpd\\_7467251/summary](http://findingaids.cul.columbia.edu/ead/nnc-rb/ldpd_7467251/summary). Among the many commentaries on Schapiro's methodology the most relevant to this material is

Thomas Crow, *The Intelligence of Art* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1999). See also Cindy Persinger, *Meyer Schapiro: American Art Historian* (forthcoming), based on her dissertation, *The Politics of Style: Meyer Schapiro and the Crisis of Meaning in Art History*, completed at the University of Pittsburgh in 2007 under the supervision of Professor Barbara McCloskey. For some background to my training in Australia prior to going to New York, see "Inside out: outside in: changing perspectives in Australian art historiography," *Journal of Art Historiography*, no.4 (June 2011), at <http://arthistoriography.wordpress.com/number-4-june-2011/>.

TS Sydney, June 23, 2012

## Art History - G6001x: Art History Theory and Methods

Professor Meyer Schapiro, Columbia University, New York, Spring 1973

The preliminary reading list:

Julius von Schlosser, *Die Kunstliteratur*<sup>1</sup> (Comment: This is an anthology of art texts placed in their ideas context). It was translated as *Letteratura artistica*.<sup>2</sup>

Katherine Gilbert and Helmut Kuhn, *History of Aesthetics*<sup>3</sup>

Leonelli Venturi, *History of Art Criticism*<sup>4</sup> (Comment: Your attention is drawn to the passages on Croce)

Paul Frankl, *Systeme der Kunstwissenschaft (Systems of Art History)*<sup>5</sup>

(Comment: A brief summary of Frankl may be found in an essay on "Style" in Kroeber, *Anthropology Today*<sup>6</sup>)

Arnold Hauser, *Philosophy of Art History*<sup>7</sup>

### 1. 23 January, 1973. [Introduction]

Most art history works from unexamined concepts, which seem somehow to be made to fit the concrete objects discussed. But different terms are differently viable and the same term tends to produce different results. Therefore we need to study viewpoints.

The framework of these lectures, the topics to be covered, will be these:

1. Concepts underlying classifications (style terms);
2. Criteria for defining or distinguishing styles (form and expression);
3. Meaning of the work, expression. Grounds for accepting/rejecting interpretations of a work;
4. Explanations of style. How to account for the existence of a certain work in a certain time and at a certain place. Assumptions from psychology, social history, etc., come into this;
5. Knowledge derivable from neighboring fields—details, and models of explanation. (This also includes the secondary sense in which artworks are useful to understanding in other fields, e.g. Freud, Kepler, mathematics, etc.);
6. Value judgements—their bearing on the construction of art history as a systematic field dealing with objects arranged through time and in place.

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1 Julius Schlosser, *Die Kunstliteratur. Ein Handbuch zur Quellenkunde der neueren Kunstgeschichte*, Wien: A. Schroll & Co., 1924

2 Julius Schlosser Magnino, *Letteratura artistica. Manuale delle fonti della storia dell'arte moderna*, transl. Filippo Rossi, Firenze: La Nuova Italia, 1938

3 Katherine Gilbert and Helmut Kuhn, *A History of Esthetics*, London: Thames and Hudson, 2nd ed. 1956

4 Lionello Venturi, *History of Art Criticism*, transl. Charles Marriott, New York: Dutton, 1964

5 Paul Frankl, *Die Systeme der Kunstwissenschaft (Systems of Art History)*, Brünn and Leipzig: R.M. Rohrer, 1938

6 Alfred Louis Kroeber, *Anthropology Today. An Encyclopedic Inventory*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1953. [Typically, Schapiro did not say that the summary of Frankl was part of his magnificent essay "Style" in Kroeber's book, pp. 287-312.]

7 Arnold Hauser, *The Philosophy of Art History*, New York: Knopf, 1958

There are two deep concerns, we might call them “imagination” and “curiosity,” that could be put forward if someone asks you to justify doing art history.

i) Art historical study leads to stronger and deeper enjoyment of art, develops skills in making distinctions, leads to personal growth, increases abilities in problem-solving, and patterns of thinking and creating. The non-historical study of artworks sees the discernment of value as a large part of art history. Close observation and study of *anything* (any artwork) is good in principle because it entails the possibility of enriching our experience of beauty. Art historical study enables you to apply various resources—for example, paleontology—to bring to bear any feasible, relevant method. The artwork is either valuable itself, or pertains to objects of value.

ii) Human history, considered as a totality, can be viewed through the history of art. Art history has a privileged position because it deals with concrete objects, entities that are present and universally visible, that is, in principle available for anyone to see. Art objects *precede* others (in the sense of having survived, of having arrived at the present first). Nothing else apart from works of art offer such a great and deep prospectus of man’s history. Artworks are the model, the ideal witnesses, through which historians form their view of the Age as a whole. “Greek mind,” “Greek man”—these ideas make sense because of the example of Plato. One doesn’t have to live in China to respond to an idea of China. There is a physiognomic sense in which one can discover through artworks the characteristics of a past people acting in *their* present.

The idea of Art History as a construction of the totality of art works through time and space: this presumes that through style, etc. we see a panorama, recurrent patterns, a degree of unity of mankind presumably bound to common principles (such as an “aesthetic surface” and “aesthetic expressive depth”). Herder, Hegel, Shelley announced this concept of art history’s importance.

Conversely, history acquires a new possibility for coherence, one that was inconceivable before 1900. Peel in 1882 was the first to propose it. Why not earlier? Lack of material. Engravings, for example those of Capt. Cook’s voyages, brought forward new information. But there was lack of sympathy, non-European art objects were not regarded seriously; 1859 J. Ruskin in *Political Economy of Art*<sup>8</sup> claimed only Europe has art (!). In the nineteenth century primitive workmanship was admired, but not the work as a whole. Winckelmann begins his *History of Ancient Art* with Egyptian art, because it seemed to him similar to early Archaic.<sup>9</sup> He had a taste for the mysteriousness of the Egyptian, “hieroglyphic world”—alongside Greek and Roman. In the early nineteenth century, in 1823/5, the first history of medieval art describes it as decadent: there is a strong relationship to revival notions in architecture and taste. According to Michel Foucault, courtiers in the seventeenth

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8 John Ruskin, *Unto this Last. The Political Economy of Art: Essays on Political Economy*, London: Dent, 1907

9 Johann Joachim Winckelmann, *History of Ancient Art*, New York: F. Ungar Pub. Co., 1969

century reconstructed a pedigree for the French kings, using documents of a dynasty to confirm that its power was legitimate. This was one of the causes of the destruction, during the Revolution, of the “Kings of France,” the Christian portals on, for example, the church of St Germaine-de-Pres.

British Empire civil servants used to send back “curious” artworks from the colony they governed to the British Ministry. Yet many became interested in these cultures—this is the acculturating effect of colonialism. Explorers make maps, learn languages, and collect specimens and artworks—military men/ archaeologists, the roles merge.

Apperceptive theory holds that we can appreciate in artworks only what we have today, yet classicists admire the classicism of the past. The theory is untrue—there is a range of taste in every aesthetic judgement—broader than our practice might imply. For example, in 1523 Dürer admired pre-Columbian art in Antwerp, but was not influenced by it.

In the early nineteenth century Maubert’s was the first real reaction to the Romanesque. Yet he appreciated a wide variety of art.

Is a universal art history possible? Certain tastes and norms limited the earliest histories of art. In the first half of the nineteenth century, there were some attempts at universal histories, but they were not emphasized or treated seriously. Aesthetic judgements operate in the selection, the amount of attention, and the discrimination or judgement applied to art works from cultures regarded as “odd.” Berenson called the Book of Kells “tattooing.” Often the work is admired but not the culture, for example, Abstract Expressionism in Europe now. The nineteenth century distinguished what in a work was bound to its time and what was timeless (for example, Baudelaire talking about the mode and the timeless—but treating modishness as a necessary pre-condition). Charles Baudelaire, “The Painter of Modern Life.”<sup>10</sup>

Why did people in Western Europe and America after the middle of the nineteenth century look for the totality of art? At the end of the nineteenth century ethnologists and classical scholars wrote about our customs as survivals of primitive customs. Why did ethnology museums show their materials as artworks? Did this occur in Cologne in the 1920s for the first time? In nineteenth century Western Europe, aesthetic judgement demanded that for things to be artworks they had to be figurative, to have a completeness, naturalism, grace, inner harmony, etc. This is a post-Renaissance viewpoint. It employs the norm of the human body as an ideally constructed figure. As well, certain compositional principles were regarded as essential: symmetry, balance, closed order, coloring had to be unified tonally and distributed in a balanced way. So, the basis was that every artwork is a unity and the object represented belonged to a superior world. Artworks had to bear a set of

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10 Charles Baudelaire, *The Painter of Modern Life, and Other Essays*, New York: Praeger, 1970



values, to be “high art,” to possess decorum, to be elevated above the ordinary world, to embody the good and the beautiful and the true. Each of these were esthetic ideas, not logical, ethical, etc. They constituted a screen through which all works of art had to pass. The ideal form and the proportional values of an ideal human being were applied. Savages were seen as “noble” in the South Pacific in the 1840s [sic. As Bernard Smith shows, both French and British explorers were doing this already in the 1770s]. They were presented in plays as the basic image of humanity, before culture and civilization. Western Europeans believed that certain cultures do attain ideal harmony—for example, themselves—whereas the other cultures had an inadequate sense of scale.

How does this norm disappear? Or is it suspended? Is there a new norm, current today? Riegl’s *Late Roman Art Industry*<sup>11</sup> excluded pre-historical cave paintings, although his system incorporated everything else. He came to it from political history. He believed that the late Romans and wandering Barbarians combined to produce Medieval art. What he called the *Kunstwollen* moved from the tactile to the optical—this was natural to the human mind and each people had a role to play in this great civilizing process. His *Dutch Group Portraits*<sup>12</sup> is a wonderful book.

The emphasis on change is a modernist art notion—norms of representation are replaced by norms of abstraction. From a modern perspective, the value of an artwork adheres in its forms—all marks, if structured and expressive, are admirable. Thus all of the art of the world becomes available to esthetic valuing.

## 2. 31 January, 1973 [Modern Art and the History of Art]

*Review of last week.* The aims of art history are i) evaluation ii) construction of long-term continuous history. The latter works within the former and is relevant to many other fields of history and science. This relevance increases from day to day. These views follow from a fundamental change, during the mid- to late-nineteenth century, from representation based on the human figure to abstraction, thereby opening every artwork or artifact to study.

*The Modern History of Art.* Relatively speaking, compared to earlier views, modernist thinking assumes a necessary connection between stylistic features in art and a moment of time and space. Thus interaction provides the conditions for understanding. Variety and change of types are referred to period conditions. These have a bearing on the quality, aims and characteristics of contemporary art works. Attitudes, worldviews, value systems, inventions of belief are revealed in art works (“universal history”). In contrast, the pre-modern approach assumed that study of the patterns of development in art add up to the assumption that there are processes rooted in the nature of art/mind/spirit, processes with their own laws and features,

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11 Alois Riegl, *Spätromantische Kunstindustrie* (Late Roman Art Industry), 1901; transl. Rolf Winkes, Rome: G. Bretschneider, 1985

12 Alois Riegl, *Das Holländische Gruppenportrait* (The Dutch Group Portrait), 1902; see *The Group Portraiture of Holland*, transl. Evelyn M. Kain, Los Angeles: Getty Research Institute, 1999

independent of specific conditions. Both approaches depend on large-scale, systematic evidential art history—before and after situations are crucial—each work has its place in the chain of works, an order of genesis, evolution. These patterns are built out of known works, then applied to unknown works, placing them within the known.

Art history begins in the Renaissance with Ghiberti and Vasari. Modern art history, however, believes that attributions etc. exist in a field of studies, with many scholars increasingly critical of all statements that emerge from it. This is an ideal of knowledge, most exact, refined—like that of science.

What has brought about this change from Classical and Renaissance art as the key standards of how we behave towards art? The main reason has been the actual development of modern art: during the past 100 years art has introduced new values, concepts, attitudes. These have affected the appreciation of many “primitive” art styles, treating them as being on the same plane of form construction and expressive energy as Classical and Renaissance art. This amounts to an equivalent downgrading of Classical and Renaissance art. There has been a universalizing of the concept of form. Older criticism expected more than order and unity—it wanted a form that corresponded to naturalism or idealized naturalism. The subject matters of art were “noble,” “elevated” ones. The key values of the religion and ethics of the times were based on striving to become ideal human beings. Against this, modern artists disengaged the energies of form construction and expression from subjects *per se*, and attributed artistic intention to children’s art, to the art of the insane. This concept wasn’t spelled out—it was applied broadly and thus opened up other areas of art.

In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, there developed an appreciation for lively form and flecked brushstrokes. The concept of the “painterly” was problematic during the seventeenth century, when definite forms were blurred. It led to the controversy between the Rubenistes versus the Poussinistes, the Ancients against the Moderns. New science versus old science debates were paralleled in art. The new style was notable for its *malerisch* manner and its choice of “low life” subjects. Modern styles are more or less free, and, when the artist has a choice between them, newer forms more likely to be fertile. In the nineteenth century there emerged the Romantic notion of perpetual movement and freedom in art—a freedom from norms. Delacroix and Baudelaire looked for a “supernorm” above the Classic/Romantic difference. Increasingly, the notions of harmony, order and expression were generalized, and linked with formal and expressive content (Raphael and Rembrandt could be equally valued). Until representation was abandoned in the first quarter of the twentieth century, these constructed relationships became the content of art and were fitted into the universal plane of art.

Changes in art sprung from the changing values in social life and thought. Older art had a content, subject matter that sprung from institutions, religions, the state, the

aristocracy, etc. Subjects were commissioned by non-artists. We cannot understand the art unless we comprehend the social structure it was made within, the collective occasions and institutions, the super-individual necessity. Old norms grew out of the values of these institutions as well as from formal problems: artists tried to invent expressively adequate forms. Artists were selected by patrons on these grounds. Since the seventeenth century, and especially during the nineteenth and twentieth, the choice of subject becomes free and belongs to personal life of the artist. This life also has a profound social dimension, for example, the subject matter of walking as an activity. In the Middle Ages walking was processional, a ritual practice not determined by the individual, it was a parade. In the nineteenth century there was the promenade, for example, the German *Spaziergang*—we can predict who will be where, when; there were institutional procedures for taking this kind of walk, these are important in Balzac's descriptions of Paris in the nineteenth century. Private walking entails a new look at the city, a new look *for* the city. It became as statistically predictable as ritual procession. Note the five types of strollers between 1840 and 1850. Thus the personal and the social were no longer mutually exclusive. The personal, therefore, became a more open social phenomenon.

Modern art becomes a function of individuals who have a greater freedom in organizing their own lives—to move about, change, and effect others. This outlook was then applied to all previous cultures, making them more recognizably human. In this way, we distinguish ourselves from others without implying their inhumanity. (This perspective, of course, was applied to Europe and America, not to “less free” countries.)

There was a change in the sense of “being human” in psychology and social thought. Mostly, this was motivated by concepts of the irrational. These were viewed as partially destructive but also as indicating that the sources of uncertainty were unconscious. This allowed a primitive basis for all art, and brought man closer to “primitive” art itself and to children's art. From the early nineteenth century, this view becomes obvious. In 1840 Töppfler saw children's art as similar in different cultures: the “direct expression of an idea through forms which are signs” was held to be true for all children. An ideal narrative of an artist's life arises: as students we assimilate our whole culture, then we have to tap our children's creativity, after which it is possible for us to become great artists—Pope, Baudelaire, and many others held this view. It is a key background to the late nineteenth century breakthrough. All this was sustained by psychology, which gives the human a more complex configuration, with stress on the subjective moment as crucial.

Freedom of art as a manifestation of human freedom. In some societies the warrior is the model human being, sometimes the priest, often the gentleman, or the good bourgeois businessman. In the nineteenth and twentieth centuries the artist becomes the model because he is the example of the free human being, because he shows the greatest freedom of choice in his work, he is not influenced by others, and also exhibits development, self-criticism more than any others. Other disciplines are divided into various different labors, and hackwork becomes important. The artist

embodies the warrior, priest, and businessman—a synthesis of these—with an added element of pathos, because only one in a hundred artists is successful. The effort is regarded highly and success is well rewarded. Scientists are parallel, but scientists are controlled and their work is divided in tasks, yet sometimes scientists conceive of themselves as artists.

All this adds up to a more richly universal history of art when placed into a totality.

Scientific thinking has had great effects on art and on audiences' view of it. The artwork as open, self-transforming and public; criticism in the form of imitation or not, as influence, as practical approach: all this is scientific in character.

Science's tendency to universalism, its speculative experimentation, admits many potentially false notions under the control of an on-going, venturesome activity.

The scientific taste for elementarism, for basic universal features is less evident in normal science but, in theoretical science, such definitions are the bases of the science itself. Thus the tendency to axiomatization. So, too, artists ask what are the root, underlying elements of an artwork? Thus the possibility of a minimal or elementarist art. This can be applied to earlier styles. One isolates aspects of forms, just as linguists isolate phonemes, etc., to build up the whole of art. Axiomatize and then systematize.

At the same time, there is a consciousness of political and social development. The notion of progress arises: "mankind on the march," Michelet's *History of France*<sup>13</sup>, "Christ the engineer driving the locomotive of history." Progress is the necessarily implicit goal: human destiny, together with a faith in freedom and inventiveness, is linked to an idea of art providing a notion of the succession of generations. World economy, world market, world culture. Opening up of the rest of the world to Western thought. All this creates awareness of alternatives and the need to grasp something about the colonies. The Stoics had a notion of universalism—monotheism—the sun as the source of all light shining on everyone. But the Stoics would not have accepted the independent status of other peoples.

Classification and attribution enters into all art historical explanation and even some evaluation. The statement "This is a Rembrandt" entails a classification, so does "This is a copy of Rembrandt." Even when one is dealing with a single work these factors enter in: for example, Homer's *Odyssey* is not all by Homer, indeed, Homer might be a later anthologist. This implies a configuration of the Homer texts, one in which fine discrimination is needed, close scrutiny, and awareness of the other poets.

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13 Jules Michelet, *History of the French Revolution*, transl. Keith Botsford, Wynnewood, PA: Livingston Publ., 1972

There is a conception of art as belonging to *Geisteswissenschaft* rather than *Naturwissenschaft*, that it is part of knowledge of the whole of man, not just the knowledge of nature. This distinction rests on sets of opposed categories. Man, a unique individual, each person with a specific history, is subject to judgements of value, to empathy and intensity, paying attention to mind, soul, spirit, imagination and feeling, and is therefore a less exact object of understanding. In contrast, Nature is seen as general, universal, entailing no valuation, consisting entirely of all samples, thus explanation cannot get “inside” atoms. Nature has none of the “human” characteristics and so we can be exact about it. The study of art, therefore, many say, has nothing to do with classifying, except for museums, dealers and owners. (Cf. Wilhem Dilthey’s books.) Wölfflin posited the possibility of a “history of art without names”; that shocked *die Geisteswissenschaftler*. Croce and Venturi said that great works transcend classification, Friedlander that classifying only captures the “little fish.”

But this is a false set of dichotomies. Geology, for example, uses historical evidence, information about the history of the world, such as evolutionary theory, modern genetics. The concept of a law is an empirical observation, or a generalization from evidence. Kohler challenged the notion that science was value free: he argued that the understanding of nature entailed a concept of “requiredness,” a detail required by the whole of a given situation, that it was subject to the tendency to equilibrium. Value in science is explored in Norman Campbell’s *What is Science?*<sup>14</sup> There are esthetic choices in physical equations, for example, we might see Kepler’s ellipses in the context of Mannerist art (they are not really ovals). Dagobert Fry has drawn attention to the Mannerist preference for asymmetry. Galileo refused to accept Kepler’s notions because of his preference for circles. He was wrong, but his preference was also a possible direction.

Beauty in mathematical theory: this is seen when a theory is both surprising and economic. We don’t have an aesthetic of scientific research, we only have accounts of *representations* of theories. Great and less great science is a value distinction. Polanyi has shown us how natural scientists work with a map of the world: they discover cities, rivers, landmasses, and ultimately the poles. Polanyi’s *Personal Knowledge*<sup>15</sup> explains the acceptance or rejection of scientific theories, but he is talking about scientists, not sciences. On the question of translatability, Whitehead argues that good math results do not reveal their national setting, but each nation has its own style of error. Goethe believed that the test of a good poem was its translatability. But an artwork is very much changed in translation, in science not quite so. Therefore science is less personalist in its *results*, although not its methodology or presentation. We might say that the personal element is, obviously, crucial in invention, but doesn’t carry through to the outcome.

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14 Norman Campbell, *What is Science?*, New York: Dover Publications, 1953

15 Michael Polanyi, *Personal Knowledge; Towards a Post-Critical Philosophy*, London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1962

### 3. 7 February 1973 [Classification in Science and in Art History]

Classification is a basic procedure of art history. Yet there are philosophers who regard classification as misleading, wasteful, insignificant. To attribute a work to the "School of..." does not get to the important uniqueness of artworks. When this is generalized to a broad view of culture—to *Geistes-* and *Naturwissenschaft*—irreducible distinctions are drawn. Dilthey (1810-1914) wrote systematic *Geisteswissenschaft*. (See H. Rickert, *Limits of Concept Formation in Natural Science*)<sup>16</sup> which puts forward logical and practical differences between nature and man with regard to the logos. Around 1900 there was a movement to make history more scientific by applying scientific method. Rickert criticized this. One might compare it to the current interest in "psycho-history."

Particular/ general contrast	The human field cf. the single artwork, artist.
Universal, ahistorical/ historical	Prefers particular artwork, overviews utopian.
Objects value free, unaffected Cf. judgement/ evaluative	Is it useful, susceptible to analysis? Cf. beautiful, good etc.
Abstracts, isolates, no sense of the unity, totality	Whole of artwork
Objects meaningful as data only, has no intended purposive meaning	Artwork meaningful in itself, purposive, intended to communicate
Objects related to others, "Verbindung," that is, systematized	Artwork exists for itself and beyond its time

Lichtenberg, in a dialogue written in the 1780s, described "the dream." A chemist has a vision of a being who offers him a sphere, which he analyses quantitatively and qualitatively, but finds no new elements. Then suddenly he saw it as the Globe, but when he dusted it off he wiped off the earth. Next, there appeared a strange paper that he wanted to analyze as paper, not as writing. (*New York Review of Books*, Schapiro's translation.<sup>17</sup>) The moral? The scientist explains and is shallow, deals with the surface phenomena, whereas the humanities student has intuition, insight and achieves a deeper communication with the object.

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16 Heinrich Rickert, *Die Grenzen der naturwissenschaftlichen Begriffsbildung: eine logische Einleitung in die historischen Wissenschaften*, Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr, 1929; *Limits of Concept Formation in Natural Science*, New York: Cambridge University Press, 1986

17 Georg Christoph Lichtenberg, "A Dream," translated by Meyer Schapiro, *New York Review of Books*, August 13, 1970, vol. 15, no. 3, Available at: <http://www.nybooks.com/articles/archives/1970/aug/13/a-dream/>

Natural Science versus Human Science. There are some questions about the validity of this distinction:

Science achieves coherence and advances by communities working together. Science is historicist in many of its questionings, for example, origins of the earth (predictions?). Geology, biology, and physics (entropy)—genetics. Biologists' ideas are often used about artforms, for example, "organic," etc. Blum *Time's Arrow* (Princeton)<sup>18</sup>, in explaining the development from molecules to organic life, uses a comparison to Gothic architecture as an example of non-purposive growth.

Physicists have laws "without dates," yet all statements about art must have a time dimension.

For astronomy and geology time is crucial, yet all statements are limited to the existence of the globe. Does a physical Law hold forever, has it held forever, all over the universe?

(E. Zilsel—*Genies*<sup>19</sup>—The notion of unique prime number individuals became well known, for example, geniuses).

Some physical laws have a narrow range, for example, biological, cultural ranges, one individual's life span.

An artwork may be thought of as a law-like system with a narrow range but of growing value.

Have the laws of physics changed in time? This is impossible to answer. If the whole universe were contracted, would we know? Gravitational constant.

General concepts. We do need them in art discussion? If we have a prior concept of art, then some categorizable features are universal, for example, color, line, etc. Style categories are usually limited to one period, although mannerism can reappear throughout art history, as can baroque elements, that are not confined to the Baroque period. This is a question about the fitness of language to characterize a group of phenomena and their range, for example, "the Homeric."

Meaningfulness (*Sinnhaftigkeit*) is crucial for the arts, for all social thinking (Schutz<sup>20</sup>). Purposive human activity, that which is intended to communicate, for example, speaking, gesture, transactions, effort—all this is meaningful here. What of involuntary gestures? Do they communicate? To Freud, neuroses are purposive. Animals communicate often. Schachtel: art occurs when Freud's drive orientations are mastered (compare this to Freud himself).<sup>21</sup> What are the meaningful characteristics of the species Man, a member of the natural world? George Mead of Chicago (student of Charles Morris) in *Mind, Self and Society, Philosophy of the Act*,

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18 Harold Francis Blum, *Time's Arrow and Evolution*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1955

19 Edgar Zilsel, "History and Biological Evolution," *Philosophy of Science*, Jan., 1940, vol. 7, no. 1, pp. 121-128

20 Alfred Schutz, *The Phenomenology of the Social World*, Evanston, Ill.: Northwestern UP, 1967

21 Ernest Schachtel, *Metamorphosis. On the Conflict of Human Development and the Psychology of Creativity*, Hillsdale: Analytic Press, 1959

and *History of Thought in the 19<sup>th</sup> Century*,<sup>22</sup> offers a biological, pragmatic view of how meaning arises in the natural world; and does so in a behaviorist manner. Compared to Skinner,<sup>23</sup> Watson is responsive the subtleties of the levels of the mind.<sup>24</sup>

*Animal Speech*: we tend to have folk knowledge of this. In the seventeenth century scientists developed a syntax and dictionary of animal speech, but with no sentences in it, and no syllogisms.

*Linguistics*: post-mathematical theory of linguistics, syntactical structures (when we are making statements about a person we are not actually making a statement about the molecules of which he is composed). Scientists of all sorts can see artwork from many different viewpoints.

Q: What is the meaning of one human action compared to for example, a speech by President Nixon and a symphony by Beethoven? This is not a question that would submit to a lowest common denominator answer.

A: We could appreciate it through a distinction between signs and symbols, the latter being deliberate human actions. *Semiotics*, according to C. S. Peirce,<sup>25</sup> is based on distinguishing three types of sign:

Indexical signs, for example, dark clouds equal rain, Man Friday's footprints;  
Symbolic signs, for example, human speech conventions; and  
Iconic signs, for example, naturalistic artworks, signs that look like that to which they refer.

These three are separate from each other, mostly. The scientist looks to indexical signs, but he also uses iconic signs when he looks at screens, etc. But does he use symbols?

Does a different criteria of valid statement operate in regard to artworks compared to natural objects? Scientists emphasize beauty, economy and elegance but prior to that the theory has to be true and tenable. Prematurity? Art and science not so special in this regard: as shown in a *Scientific American* article. There are unproved theories in mathematics: "Every even number is the sum of two primes" is true

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22 George Herbert Mead, *Mind, Self, and Society from the Standpoint of a Social Behaviorist*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1934; *Philosophy of the Act*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1938; *Movements of Thought in the Nineteenth Century*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1936

23 Burrhus Frederic Skinner, *Science and Human Behavior*, New York: Macmillan, 1953; *Beyond Freedom and Dignity*, New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1971; *About Behaviorism*, New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1974

24 John Broadus Watson, *Psychology from the Standpoint of a Behaviorist* (1919), Charlestown, SC: Nabu Press, 2010

25 Charles Hawthorne, Paul Weiss and Arthur W Burks eds., *Collected Papers of Charles Sanders Peirce*, Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1960-66; Charles Sanders Peirce, *Peirce on Signs: Writings on Semiotic*, James Hoopes ed., Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1991



because it is beautiful. Golbach's conjecture.<sup>26</sup> But this is really a comment about intellectual work that comes together in form—in *any* field.

Truth testing—observation, interpretation, judgement, etc. During Goethe's *Italian Journey* he visited Paestum.<sup>27</sup> At first, he disliked the temples there, but he pulled himself together, via Winckelmann,<sup>28</sup> that is through art history, and came to like them. "Olympian child with brown eyes, almost black."

Apollonius of Tyana came to Olympia and saw and admired an archaic statue of Milo. The tight treatment of hands and legs and the meaning of the pomegranate is given a physical explanation, but he also sees Milo as a Hera priest and then examines the sculpture on stylistic grounds as a second century BC, Archaic Greek work, revived into taste.<sup>29</sup>

Artworks have value, and are therefore worth studying. Scientists are attracted to astronomy, therefore to the beauty and mystery of the heavens. We see this parallel in such books as Hardy's *Two on a Tower*,<sup>30</sup> and Zinner's *The Stars Above Us*.<sup>31</sup> Medicine is guided by value-goals; for example, "pathology" is a value statement. Applied sciences have value-goals. The lines between fundamental and applied science are not really discernible. In scientific truth-testing there is always a goal, without reference to a value-term. For example, the safety of a bar is not a consideration for testing its tensile strength, when the goal is to measure the breakage point. An exception is Köhler's theory of equilibrium as inherent in all nature—"forgetting," "unfinished actions"—not relational but an inherent tendency in all matter to homeostasis.<sup>32</sup> In aesthetics he saw equivalences to "requiredness" in, for example, dress choices, completion of tasks, a certain symmetry between the demands of nature and of the human mind. Gestalt perception and structure. But value for whom? For the molecule? For Köhler, this was its preferred state of nature. Was it a mental preference? Köhler's answer is no, but he points out that in nature there is a *style* of an eagle (species and being), and a culture's *style* is not the conscious creation of individuals.

This leaves us with a methodological dilemma. Art history does not require measurement, in the sense of the accuracy that is required by scientific method, but it does require a different kind of measurement, one productive of the same kind of

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26 See, for example, Uwe Kraeft, *Goldbach's Conjecture and Structures of Primes in Number Theory*, Aachen: Shaker, 2010

27 Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, *Italian Journey 1786-1788*, transl. W H Auden and Elizabeth Mayer, New York: Pantheon Books, 1962

28 Johann Joachim Winckelmann, *History of the Art of Antiquity* (1764), Los Angeles: Getty Research Institute, 2006

29 Flavius Philostratus, *The Life of Apollonius of Tyana*, Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1948-50

30 Thomas Hardy, *Two on a Tower*, London: Macmillan, 1960

31 Ernst Zinner, *The Stars Above Us, or, The Conquest of Superstition* (New York: Scribner, 1957)

32 On Köhler's theory, see for example: John M Wallace and Peter Victor Hobbs, *Atmospheric Science: An Introductory Survey*, New York: Academic Press, 1977

truth. This is an acceptable conclusion: *truth* is the aim, even if it will always be partial.

#### 4. 14 February 1973 [Classification in Art History]

Last week we began to compare knowledge of nature to knowledge of art. We did *not* compare art to nature: logos and subject should not be confused. Take the idea that we have qualitative knowledge of art in contrast to a quantitative knowledge of science. This is hardly a clear distinction. Math has to do with qualities often, and it measures without numbers but by qualities—for example, the diminishing height of people, the hardness of materials, the ordering of a gradient, or clusters with uneven curves. (See Oppenheim, *The Concept of Type in the Light of Modern Logic*.<sup>33</sup>) Forms of deviation, irregularity, or family resemblance groups are measured—for example, in anthropology. These are vague, not readily definable concepts (for example, Lévi-Strauss's *Elementary Structures of Kinship*<sup>34</sup>). Fluid properties, a degree of vagueness, are accountable, for example, statistically.

How do we get to know things effectively? What constructs do we need to make?

The objective/subjective distinction: can it be defined by its objects?—that is, can we say that all statements about art are subjective, but those about molecules are objective? “Subjective” may mean idiosyncratic compared to collective beliefs, yet *one* person might be right, especially if his statement shows a defect in the general reasoning. “Subjective” statements may mean those made about an experience that is available only to the subject—for example, internal pains that are unobservable from outside, or the whole field of unconscious feeling, emotion, etc. Currently, there is an assumption that there is a distinction between what can and cannot be observed or communicated to others, as if there were two types of knowledge. But science deals with many unobservables, for example, atoms whose *effects* are observable but not the atoms themselves. Some of these observations are not yet generalized into laws. Can we make objective statements about “private” matters? Can we take measure of sensations as responses to stimuli? Koestler noted that astronomers gave different reports of intensities, etc. of the stars that they see, which leads to the need to produce a law of invariant relations to cover the differences in these subjective reports.<sup>35</sup> The idealistic dualism, the mind/body distinction, is crucial here. First person statements about objects, ourselves, etc., are protocol for objective science.

How does quantifying relate to artworks? Measurement has practical uses to describe the properties of solid material objects. To see whether an artwork is the same as the one described by so-and-so, or the same as it was when so described.

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33 Paul Oppenheim and Carl Gustav Hempel, *Der Typusbegriff im Lichte der neuen Logik*, Leiden: A.W. Sijthoff, 1936

34 Claude Lévi-Strauss, *The Elementary Structures of Kinship*, London: Eyre and Spottiswoode, 1969

35 Arthur Koestler, *The Sleepwalkers: A History of Man's Changing Vision of the Universe*, London: Hutchinson, 1959

Dating by Carbon 14 or tree-rings is crucial to prehistoric studies. *Entasis* may be used to measure the dating of Greek temples, that is, if you presume an even rate of bulging originally, that diminishes regularly through time, this gives exact dates once certain works are taken as standard. Gardin at the Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique in Paris is collaborating with a topologist to specify curves on pottery to match eye/type classifying with analytic formulas for curves. The theory of proportions may be used in a normative sense: certain of these will guarantee order and harmony, for example, the Golden Section. (There is a long history to this—Ghika, Wittkower's *Renaissance and Humanism*<sup>36</sup> studies this - also applied to music since Pythagoreas). Discerning the differences between the script of a long-term manuscript, one on which scribes develop their script throughout their lives, is an example of measuring the collective transformations of a medium which is, in some sense, physiognomic, related to the individual. In the eleventh and twelfth century "r" is replaced by "s", which first appeared at the end of a line only. Frequency counts can be useful to determine date, authorship; but there is always a problem with determining the proper size of the sample. When studying who wrote the text *Imitation of Christ*,<sup>37</sup> someone discovered a manuscript that suggested that Thomas à Kempis was the translator only. Stochastic method predicts sequences and the likelihood of certain words (and paintings) occurring. All this is rudimentary, because art theorists are not interested in maths.

Art history: a conviction that being able to say when and where a work was made, then being able to set it in context, enables us to grasp many features we wouldn't otherwise be able to register. We can also see effects on other works. There are many difficulties, beyond the usual allowance for exceptions, in applying this approach. We do not have a sufficiently strong body of principles to connect one type of event with another.

Should we, then, treat history as a succession of unique events? History is very abstract; often there is no direct contact with objects, no traces of them. In art we have the objects, as well as these lost unobservables. Documents allow us to reconstruct the past—after we have developed criteria for the veracity of the documents. We always understand events in *classes*, for example, the history of the French Revolution is not everything that occurred 1789-95, but the events crucial to the social change before and during this period, all depending on your theory of what the French revolution amounts to. Leonid Andreyev has a story of the tradesman of Jerusalem who was preoccupied by his bad toothache during the day of the Crucifixion.

All knowledge is understood as a relation to something else other than itself, and to thinking and seeing too. Signs are the only marks available if the references are not read. Sign means "Stands for."

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36 Rudolf Wittkower, *Architectural Principles in the Age of Humanism*, London: A. Tiranti, 1962

37 Thomas à Kempis, *The Imitation of Christ* (1427), transl. Ronald Knox and Michael Oakley, New York: Sheed and Ward, 1959

A value preference regarding one's theory—one's interests, goals, engagements, who focuses on which parts of the world-field. We don't have an exhaustive relationship to anything. The all is obscure, the whole is possible as a segregated selection, grasping the all is an unachievable aim.

Events are selected because they exhibit properties that fit with our preferences in classifying. Classifying is an arrangement of materials. Compare the situation in science: evolution owes a lot to classifying. It is wrong to say that Darwin's theory of evolution was the first biological overview, the first systematic theory. It depends on observing forms in the environment. Taxonomy—groups which cohabit and interbreed in a particular environment—this is a typical art historian's procedure. Classifying seems to use an arbitrary language, but it is not arbitrary as a procedure.

Yet classifying is not natural. There is no defining the essence of nature, a singular sense of nature—for example, the statement "man is an animal, who is rational," is absurd.

Imagine that you were the International Director of the Museum of the Twenty-First Century. How would you store works from all over the world against the Atomic Bomb? Shopping centers have this problem: how do you store objects so as to be able to retrieve them?

*Size?* Assign numbers according to size and a magnitude; then they could be found easily. This would incidentally show that large works have certain properties in common, for example, Pyramids, Mayan Ziggurats, etc. But there are too many differences: for example, large and small Egyptian works have a lot in common.

*Substance?* Stone, glass. Materials are still crucial for aesthetic features of artworks. (See Smith in *Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society*<sup>38</sup>, recent issue.)

*Subject Matter?* Narrative, portrait, literature, poetry, still-life etc. Those with different architectural functions...

All of these classifications are *objective*, that is to say, the work does or does not have x property. Although there are vaguenesses, they could be handled statistically, etc.

*Place and time?* Once there is an historical consciousness there will be dating. Traders found places for the work they pilfered. Cultures typically distinguish their own work from before, set their own period in a *good* light usually! Patriotism, belief in progress, reinforce this. Inheritance. Rulers—dynasties. Religions. Artworks are used to show that the saints existed right

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38 Cyril S. Smyth, "Metallurgical Footnotes to the History of Art," *Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society*, vol. 116, no. 2, Apr. 17, 1972, pp. 97-135

back to the time of Christ, or were an object of cults. Early Christian art is still studied to fill the gap in evidence, as the Catacombs date to around 300AD. Locating the works in time and place permits special things: it leads to the recognition of the cultural segmentation of styles in a certain place, and shows prior and later differences. A unity cutting across the quantitative criteria listed above. Thousands of works are needed as evidence. The historical character of art is therefore evident. Michelangelo follows Leonardo, not precedes him, as their work shows.

This approach allows us to access documents contemporary with the work; we know where to look if we have the rough date. You read around the time. Test what you are saying about the intention of the artwork against the times and the other works of the time. In reverse: art gives evidence to music historians, literary historians, etc.

Time-space is the richest resource. But does not exclude the others. Time-space classifying does not give any essence; it permits us only to isolate features for discrimination and comparison.

On the universal order of human art activities. We would like to include even more things, if we were able to notice them. Our present preferences lead us to start looking at new areas and cultures, even earlier stages of primitive art. Subdivisions in time and region within art styles are relevant. Regional groupings through styles, for example, of the migrating tribes of Europe and Central Asia via study of the changing styles of fibula. With regard to individuals, individual artists, we can discern stages of style in their *oeuvres*.

Time-space gives a proximate sense of unity of styles, one that holds for every order of magnitude; even up to all art. (Can we compare the Romantic to the Classical in all art?) Your approach to classification is affected by your concept of style. Two style-concepts: (i) one feature is sufficient to identify a fixed style, because it occurs within time-space; or (ii) style depending on *current* esthetics, norms, preferences, that suggests criteria not available before. In general, style is a means of classifying and characterizing the constants in the art works of many individuals, groups, regions, nations, peoples, etc.

#### **5. 21 February 1973 [Style – “Time-Space,” Names, Diagnostics]**

*Last week:* Classification of artworks—size, material, technique, subject matter. All classifications arise from our interest in some aspect of a whole. The cherry tree meant something different to George Washington and to its grower. Is there not a supra-interested way of approaching artworks? Art as art is better understood, experienced, realized if artworks are distinguished according to style and time-space. Further, such classification reveals unexpected unities.

Q: Are all these classification statements of the same logical type, or are they different?

A: All the same type. Determining membership of a class is a matter of fact, except in borderline cases. The decision to form a class out of one quality or another is, however, arbitrary.

Style and time-space classifying is generative of new information. Correspondences between style and time-space features—how do you establish their similarity? For example, Mannerism as a style. Its time and place, 1560 to 1700, Italy, France etc., how do all these factors relate? Unequivocal demonstration of the characteristics is difficult. Another example: apples, Macintosh, degree of survivability, size. The George Washington story leads to questions of value.

Time-space value is a useful experiential measure. People are from certain places, of certain ages. We habitually make groupings of a classificatory time-space sort. We cannot act without making distinctions of this sort. They are vague boundaries, but it is still possible to work logically in this vagueness. When we study history we transfer to these past times and places our time-space sense, because we can't experience their time-space directly. Our own immediate past is crucial here.

Time-space is established for artworks by evidence of time and place, for example, through comparison to dated works, by checking against dated documents. We can say that works must have been done at such and such a time in the past. But why are we so confident about "similar looking" past work, when locally, now, in downtown New York, there is a plethora of variety? Because we know of thousands of works, not just a few; we have many documents, usually of all sorts (all external to aesthetics). It is the same as constructing a map of a new country, first, note the general outstanding features, then more detailed observation, followed by surprises. The continuing collective work over decades by many scholars with well-documented works, and with undocumented but related work, guarantees the large scale mapping of a region, a period, or connections between periods, of places all over the globe at a given time, but it is never fully covered.

It follows that works produced at a wide spread in time and place have family resemblances. But within generational periods, say twenty-five years, they have more features in common than they have with the work of the next generation. Experts give much importance to internal evidence, to features of form, composition, and structure. Some evidence is both external and internal, for example, costumes of a period, style of lettering is datable, so, too, buildings in the background. The style of the painting should be compared to the style of the objects represented in the artwork. Racial expressions are relevant, for example, a Flemish compared to an Italian person of a period—social, physiognomic types come into play, for example, the uptight Dutchman. Artists have typical physiognomies, too, typical ways of doing drapery. All of these are vague, but nonetheless they are useful and are widely used.

This bears on the history of art as art history. Such procedures enable us to form law-like properties (propositions). For practical purposes it is certain that if a work has  $x$  features, you can guess its time-space details roughly. We can make law-like statements, which tell us something about a society. We compare the common language of a period and place, its structural laws, for example, about consonants. Law-like characteristics seem true of social behavior as a whole, not because they are done together but because they are done alike. This shows us, however, only what *is* so, not *why* it is so. But we nevertheless have a naive sociology built into our classifying—a limited view of how imagination, generations and people behave, and we can make out those who act against or differently from the types we set up. We fit stylistic groups with time-space locations to these values (and vice-versa).

Notions of originality, the avant-garde, imitation, the idea that everybody is original. These so-called objective characteristics of history are actually based on naive notions of social behavior.

The overall map is, however, full of variances. Which inventions take? Do most neologisms fail because of their prematurity?

When we compare one set of time-space mappings to another, for example, the shift from Attic to Classical in Greek Art around 400 BC or that from Romanesque and Gothic 1050 to 1200 AD, or Han to Wei compared to Tan to Sung, we can find shared features. Are there inherent forms of development? Without the overall taxonomic mapping we could not even begin to ask this sort of question.

*Stylistic Mapping.* Works of art are not mapped arithmetically (time) nor spatially (geography), but rather a different language is used: “Greek of the Archaic Period,” “Realism.” These two have different sounds—a national designation, a relation to nature. Or we use terms such as Middle Minoan I, II, and III, or Magdalenian. There is arbitrariness in the choice of name. “Gothic” is not the art of the Goths. Romanesque does not mean neo-Roman.

Q: Because style characteristics are spread over all the arts, does this mean that they have a spiritual essence in common?

A: Handwriting, shipbuilding, manners, posture, economics—all of these have styles. Kröbler demonstrated the biological style of animals. We speak of the “Style of a President,” the form of his behavior, or of a mathematical style. “Style” is a universal, cheap word. Too little is done to make these distinctions explicit and explanatory.

*Style names.* “Gothic” had to do with the disrespect toward, and lack of repair of, actual Gothic buildings. Naming gives a certain value, history, etc. to a work. Naming generates new names, it is heuristic, it tells you where to look for style features.

How are they formed? These names need to be classified:

— of peoples, nations, pro or con;

- dynastic: Roman Imperial, Han;
- place, region: School of Paris, School of New York, “School of the Pacific,” that is, recent art on the West Coast of this country;
- aesthetic: the word “Baroque” derives from the Portuguese for “pearl,” which is a positive naming, but also from an old scholastic syllogism, which is a contra, negative naming. The name “Impressionism” was given by enemies of the art, but the artists loved it. It led to the term “Post-Impressionism.” Futurism was named one and half years before the works were made. It was chosen by the artists involved, as were “Suprematism” and “Vorticism.” These correspond to an idea of art history, the urge to separate oneself as group, in the public mind, from others;
- biological naming: a plant might have a scientific name and a vernacular name. Geology has Jurassic (place), Triassic (triple layer of rock), Metazoic (animals found in rock).

Naming is nevertheless subservient to the collection of style features to which it refers.

Style names embody a theory that there is some deep connection between the actual artworks and a time and place. We do need to examine social circumstances to understand the form of the artwork, for example, the four musicians in a Carolingian illustration of David, the four ministers around Carolingian Emperor. Merovingian art is generally folkloristic, handicrafty, employing few figures, and is simple compared to Carolingian narrative, with its use of classical figures. The latter expresses the founding of the Holy Roman Empire, and the resumption of a classical culture.

Whether we use the word “Carolingian” or not, we still can localize artworks to times and places which are connected by being in the area and duration of Charlemagne and Charles the Bald. This localization leads us to see connections with other historical configurations, for example, those of Empire. Time-space boundaries are, finally, cultural and community-based. They are not significantly tied to latitudes and longitudes (someone tried to do this—Strzygowski<sup>39</sup>). They are theory-laden, the product of holding a theory(s) about a body of art.

The practice of art is social and communal; thus there is a law-like relationship between the place, the time and the work. Florentine art has distinct characteristics. There is an explanatory weight to this knowledge of sources, for example, we can identify a Gothic chapel within a great Romanesque building: “It was built in the fourteenth century.” But we can’t contrast all things one to the other in this way. Mapping provides an explanation of sorts, but it does not explain the process itself, such comparisons are impossible: why things are as they are is a second order of the problem.

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39 Joseph Strzygowski, *Origin of Christian Church Art: New Facts and Principles of Research*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1923

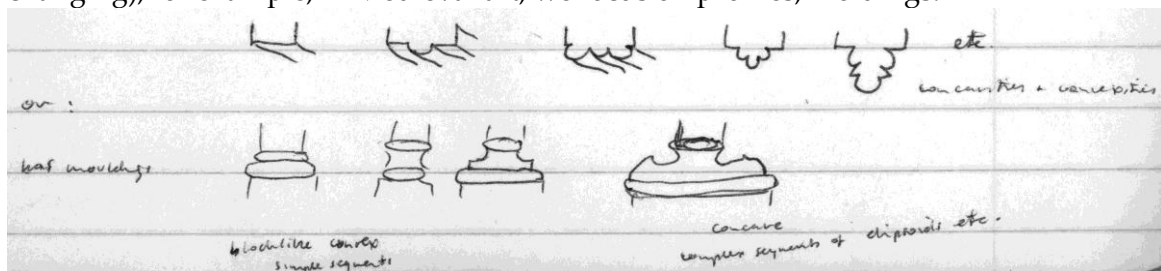


Compare biology: classifications are done by morphology, for example, whales are the biggest fish. Criteria such as whether interbreeding was possible, and factors of habitat, were taken as basic until recently. Art history has done just this for many years, for example, "School of Raphael," "Flemish School." This sort of term follows from our beliefs about artists learning from one another in, say, Flanders at a certain time, that is, it is about interbreeding and habitat.

Initially, we pick out diagnostic style features—those which distinguish Perugino from Raphael. According to Giovanni Morelli, a painter changes his way of working depending on subject matter, but certain elements remain the same, for example, the treatment of the ear, the fingertips. He applied the ideas of a physician, that is, comparative anatomy. He was an Italian patriot, disturbed by the principalities of Italy, who were very proud of their local masterworks. Morelli tried to clear all these fakes away and unite Italy by pointing to authentic shared possessions. Some see so many details that they deny imagination or invention, claiming that only the scientific is useful. This tells us nothing about the thing itself, only that it exists; it is a means of identifying, not of explaining.

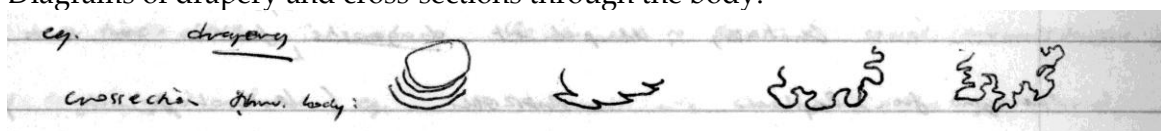
Style as a more deeply formative and operative structure needs to be studied. A style might be shared by a school in some fine sense, or minutely changed.

A diagnostic view of style as a means of classifying features is very important, therefore, because it leads to (i) a deeper sense of style, and (ii) to interpolation in mapping: artworks made in the year 1200 have qualities 1,2,3,4 compared to works made in 1250 which have qualities 1,2,3,4,5,6. We find an undated work with qualities 1,2,3,4,5 but not 6, and cannot therefore exclude the possibility that it was made between 1200-1250. Are all these qualities are useful. We need features that change sufficiently and steadily through time (neither unchanging nor too quickly changing), for example, in Medieval art, we focus on profiles, moldings.



This enables us to get specific about dating, to use a diagnostic clue without explanation of the work or the cause of change. It just occurs, for example, changes in drapery.

Diagrams of drapery and cross-sections through the body:



There is a progressive articulation through the Medieval period towards complexity, concavity, etc. This would not be true of proportions, but would be true of hair, forms, and letters. Those features that can give us a notion of the whole, not just the parts, are useful.

How are all the gradients related? Sometimes they do not fit for all regions, and vary because of regional factors, notably the Northern and Mediterranean Renaissance. This sort of problem might lead you to consider how different features function within a style category, for example, Giotto visiting Padua, Assisi, Rome, from Florence. If a culture is open, receptive, and mobile we need to follow it with our style categories. In case of Egypt, by contrast, Pharaonic art is to be found all over the Mediterranean but not practiced elsewhere. The permeability of boundaries is grounded in the changes a culture goes through. In the case of North Greece during the Bronze Age, in Thessaly, during the Neolithic era, cultures and art in different stages coexisted for a thousand years directly across the river from one another. There are no world historical principles to sort this out.

#### 6. 28 February 1973 [Style – Contexts, Limits]

*Review of last week:* A large body of questions clusters around the idea of style, and the constitution of adequate style terms. Time-space is more fruitful than any other classificatory device. Contexts are crucial because of their imposition on the actual creation of art works. Contexts help us date artworks. They are a partly internal, partly external way of mapping all the artworks in the world in time and place. Their looking alike leads us to connect them. Style criteria are about *degrees* of resemblance. How do we decide degrees of resemblance? Long and detailed acquaintance makes you form groups for reasons of economy and understanding. Groupings are constantly contested as to their characteristics and membership, and will be modified. This is okay, part of the process (it is comparable to other countries being viewed as good guys one year, bad the next).

Constituting larger classes is associated with naming, and thus subdivision. These are fairly arbitrary. They express a theory about the work with which they deal: (i) the work is of a fairly constant type, (ii) it is associated with a circumstance, for example, a civilization, a dynasty, a tradition. Style terms are a condensed statement of many particulars, resembling a theory in science. But they are not scientific. The term “Gothic” is based on a wrong-headed notion that the barbarians had created such superstitious junk as Chartres—this is, obviously, a judgement that assumes classical theory and values.

Style terms apply beyond art, to music, even to politics. See Friedrich of Harvard on “Baroque” politics<sup>40</sup>: a large scale horizontal unity was sought across many phenomena. Existentialism worked from philosophy into art. Style terms are not used consistently; for example, “Byzantine” can mean simply “of the empire,” or be

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40 Carl J. Friedrich, *The Age of Baroque, 1610-1660*, New York: Harper, 1952

applied to *all* pre-Gothic work. In different disciplines, style terms are used to cover different periods, to mean different things. Nevertheless, some consensus usually forms. Sometimes, however, the same style in different places has different names. Scholars know each country's quirks in this, but it is confusing for others, the non-art historians.

Often proposals for terms do not take, even when they seem more sound than the ones in use. By "Gothic" we know what we mean, roughly, we can point to paradigm cases. But when Quichart defines the Romanesque as "no longer Roman but not yet Gothic" he depends on us being clear about what we mean by "Roman" and by "Gothic." Style terms do point to some *absolute* facts: a work that is being made in Paris in 1750 is independent of whatever style terms we use. These facts are independent of the theories about the work. But often we are not sure about the date, then we go back to many examples, construct a class of types, etc., which can give us certainty as to sorts of dates. After doing this we often find that the way we originally constituted the class was wrong.

The collectivity of art making: this depends on the context of many artists, often studios, the city, and the beliefs that were held. For example, to understand Giotto we have to understand Giotto himself, Florence, the church at the time, etc. These contextual factors suggest information about the work. Later information can be relevant, later works, later patrons. If you want to understand a certain work it might be that later works exemplify where the artist thought he was going. This idea is part of Riegl's theory of *Kunstwollen*. Later works are often a reaction against earlier ones, thus the earliest Post-Impressionist works reacted against Impressionism.

What sort of evidence is pertinent to the work done in, for example, the year X? Later information can be got from, for example, a drawing done of it a hundred years later that shows that the work as we have it is not complete. Shift of sensibility within a whole culture can be important, for example, Diderot and the early Enlightenment. But Bougainville wrote in this manner earlier—and a Poitiers Abbé named Dechamps laid the groundwork for these ideas, more famously put later by Diderot. These were published in 1930, which changed our picture of the whole thing. Often there are delays in getting the information out. Joyce's concept for *Ulysses*<sup>41</sup> was preceded by Du Jardin, in Paris in 1904,<sup>42</sup> from whom Joyce may have got the notion.

Copies of documents are crucial as historical documents: Greek history is dependent on Roman descriptions of lost originals. Scholars try to reconstruct them, for example, Polygnotus's wall paintings in Delphi and Athens from copies on vases, etc. Therefore we should pay attention to traces and consequences in time. Fossils work this way for geology. But this later information is not the same as the events of

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41 James Joyce, *Ulysses*, New York: Random House, 1946

42 Édouard Dujardin, *The Bays Are Sere and Interior Monologue*, London: Libris, 1990

the time. *Later* we can discover information about the previous point in time; *when* we discover it later is not significant, the features of later time are irrelevant to the previous one.

Returning to dating from internal evidence, we face the question: why could not a datable detail have been inserted later? What is it that gives a *terminus post-quem*? Take the example of dating a trans-Jordan temple. We know that the time of building was related to the star's disposition, but this was too vaguely done by the builders. Yet portraits of certain rulers in the same temple showed monarchs, one of whom died on date x and the other ascended the throne on date y, therefore x and y gave *terminus antequem* and *postquem*.

What are the limits of such mappings? Sources of error, not quite fitting details, etc.

Copies and fakes are the first and most obvious challenge to style related to time and space. We are talking here about style in a diagnostic, not aesthetic, sense. Fingerprints identify but tell us nothing in themselves about the person.

Artists are able to work in a style previous to their own, they may start over again from their own earlier work. If you map a time-space in general terms all over a society you misdate the young innovators. Without these innovations there would not be a historical procedure that would enable us to date so exactly. Egyptian art is difficult to date exactly precisely because of its stability, compared to Europe since the seventeenth century, since when there have been decade by decade changes in painting, sculpture and architecture. Language is so stable because everything has to be said in the same words, compared to art, where fewer things have to be said in a more restricted form. There is more likely to be change in a specialized area. Each speaker in a molecular way influences the gradual drift of language.

In art, many styles may coexist; styles may develop in parallel. What happens when styles succeed each other? For example, Masaccio's work done when he was aged 23/4 was seen by old men, young men, apprentices, etc. The varied reactions were influenced by age, habits, ends and capacities, the tasks of the different artists. All this may be true of primitive societies as well. When a new style is being assimilated, there will be different degrees of assimilation at the one place. Further, there may well be two parallel developments. Expressionism, Fauvism, and Cubism in Paris, Germany, etc. around 1910 to 1920. Can you see what is shared amongst all these things?

Further, there are variations in the purposes of the artwork: cartoons, drawings, drawings for paintings, compared to drawings for murals. Can the criteria for style features in drawing and in painting be the same? And, within the one work, the artist can use different techniques, for example, van Eyck in his landscape backgrounds. Diagnostic style attribution requires an awareness of all these modifiers.

It may be that, recently, the availability of so many styles has led to a point where we cannot any longer hold to our cohering view of style. Does not the case of Picasso suggest this?

The vagueness of political and social boundaries is a problem. What are the boundaries of Italy throughout history? Space as a culture, as community, may not be homogenous, for example, women might make different work from men in the cathedral compared to the house.

Anything that helps us classify *correctly*, that is, gives us a better notion of the work from its context, is valuable.

Is the notion of the individual so precious? Rembrandt can be copied, but a circle is something that we all see the same way, as true or untrue. Some works are part Rembrandt, part not. The Assisi frescoes are usually attributed to Giotto, but in 1910 Rintelen<sup>43</sup> examined the spacing of the work, structures, and composition to show that the St Francis cycle is not by Giotto, when compared to the Padua frescoes, which are.

Unoriginal factory-made works are easier to date, therefore they are not considered as part of art precisely because they add so little and are so easy to see, like Parisian tourist art.

When someone says, "My child could do that," you might reply, "Well, until your child grows up we have to rely on what we have got, that is, *this*."

We do have more knowledge, have made more tests, than in the nineteenth century, therefore our judgements should be better than they were. Judgements are confined to one's general preferences.

The boundaries of individual artists' work can be difficult to determine. Can we discuss Giotto's participation as a student in a group project? Later, we might ask: how much did he give to the assistants? These questions amount to a modification of the notion of the homogeneity of an individual's style. Take the Master of Vezeley: we know him definitely through one work, so what do we do with early work, etc.? Is the "Isaac" painter at Assisi the young Giotto or is he Giotto's teacher? Good questions, but they do not necessarily prove one thing or the other.

### 7.7 March 1973 Style [Classification, Unity, Schema]

Style is classification. The criteria may be slight, trivial, not give us great insight into the artwork qua artwork, and be adequate only to placing it in time and place. Nonetheless, no matter how mechanical our time-space criteria, we still refer it to a sense of the whole of the work. We could compare it to recognizing a person from a

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43 Friedrich Rintelen, *Giotto und die Giotto-Apokryphen*, Munich and Leipzig: G. Müller, 1912

distance, to the ways we note the un verbalized appearance of the whole, plus extra details.<sup>44</sup> Most art historians do little more than look for fingerprints. Diagnostic features rarely give us, may or may not give us, insight into the artwork.

Taking a “physiognomic” approach, we begin from large general characteristics, for example, the “look” of a Botticelli. But a work by “Amico della Sandro” looks alike, so we examine it for details. If the work of artist “X” is usually “soft,” a work which is not soft will be rejected by us. Admitting the vagueness of boundaries, we seek more detailed diagnostic factors.

Statistical models of the occurrence of words, of features, give a profile distinctive to each artist. But this does not describe style of artist, merely diagnoses the work as by him.

“Style” originally meant a pen, a *stylus*, as well as the manner of different writing instruments. Then people noticed different qualities in say English, Italian, in spoken compared to written Latin. Why is the style problem so closely related to art? Because our aesthetic theories are based on art practice. Artists work at composing, they work at finding the style appropriate to the subject, they are experts in certain subjects, moods, techniques, more than others (so commissioners of work look for these). In these situations we look for style features. We see distinctive styles in “German,” “French” art, etc. Wölfflin recognized differences between a German and an Italian artist within the common framework of Renaissance style (he claimed to be able to distinguish Italian and German shoes).<sup>45</sup> Distinctions are made with reference to a particular goal. Style concepts may never have emerged were it not for a need to say something about this sort of impulse. Every field that has a number of variable objects, for example, chemistry, seeks to form ordering groups. We want to make the distinctions, and do it as *clearly* as possible.

*Excellence* is a concept of style. We might say: “Henry James has style, but writer x has none.” This is not strictly true, it is the same as saying of someone: “He has no heart.” Consider the statement: John F. Kennedy was a President with style. Who would like to ask a question about style?

TS: Your remark about President Kennedy, do you mean to say that he had a certain achievement of grace beyond accomplishment, beyond technical explanation?

MS: As “grace” is a feature of style at one time, “power” can be so at another. There is a notion of style as a kind of unity, when unified is seen as better than diversification, for example, Gothic style for churches, Moorish for a bathhouse, Roman for courthouses, Romanesque for a library. Why not truly Gothic? Therefore, in real Gothic there is a oneness throughout the whole. Beyond this, there is a norm

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44 Erwin Panofsky, *Perspective as Symbolic Form* (1924), mimeographic circulation in English 1952; Cambridge, MA: Zone Books, MIT Press, 1991.

45 Heinrich Wölfflin, *Classic Art. An Introduction to the Italian Renaissance*, London: Phaidon, 1964

of pure style, a high style towards which all quality judgements aspire, compared to style as a pervading set of characteristics in the different parts of the work. Kroeber said that every species is a style of nature, and compared this to art styles.<sup>46</sup> The artist Matta would imitate particular track photos from *Scientific American* during the war. Can the style terms we apply to his work be applied also to the objects photographed? Are the fields of nature distinguishable stylistically?

Q: Is intentionality a criterion?

S: A child's drawing does not intend, how do we know if he does, he does not verbalize it. A mature person's work is characteristic of him, yet it is not necessarily intentional. There is a lot of parallel, unintentional, unspecifiable material in artworks.

Kroeber's argument about style unity in nature concerned me initially, but I could not find a cogent form of disagreement. Later, I found that, in nature, Kroeber's assumption of thoroughgoing unity is not borne out by common features in many species. This also applies to art—style is not homogenous. Look at the increased modeling of the human figure during the fifteenth and the end of the sixteenth century, when it was associated with depth in order to move the figure. But in Tyrol, Normandy, etc., powerfully modeled figures are set in gold, against a flat background. Is this contradictory? In regard to Shakespeare, the French objected to his shifting from verse form to prose, to his knockabout scenes that violated unity. Shakespeare, they felt, did not take style seriously. But we admire him because we have extended our concept of style beyond unity to incorporate styles that are unified, others that are not—or are unified in different places, for example, in diction but not plot. Kroeber's notion depends on the survival of ideas of absolute fitness, an idea going back to the ancient notion that God created creatures of organic perfection. This may be applied to twentieth century art, machinery, society, etc. But it is based on a misconception of what an organism is—in fact, they grow into differentiation, and even the smallest elements have inside and outside, detailed articulations, different internal parts. That is to say, unity occurs not on the level of likeness or constancy of form but according to workability of interrelationships within a body.

Q-A: Historians readily use the term "style" as "a style" and "having style." This goes back to the notion of style underlying both, of style as a pervading unity: in the statement "He has style" it means that he has more pervading unity. But Shelley says that great style unifies opposites, whereas lesser styles do not, and Proust notes that Flaubert uses the imperfect tense when wanting to change his style—that is, grammar is seen as a function of style.<sup>47</sup>

Different contexts of use of the word "style": we mentioned before the idea of an "organism" transferred to art, and then we examined the content of that notion.

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46 Schapiro, "Style," in Kroeber, *Anthropology Today*, pp. 287-312

47 Marcel Proust, *On Art and Literature, 1896-1919*, New York: Meridian Books, 1958;

Marcel Proust, *By Way of Sainte-Beuve* (Contre Sainte-Beuve), London: Chatto & Windus, 1958

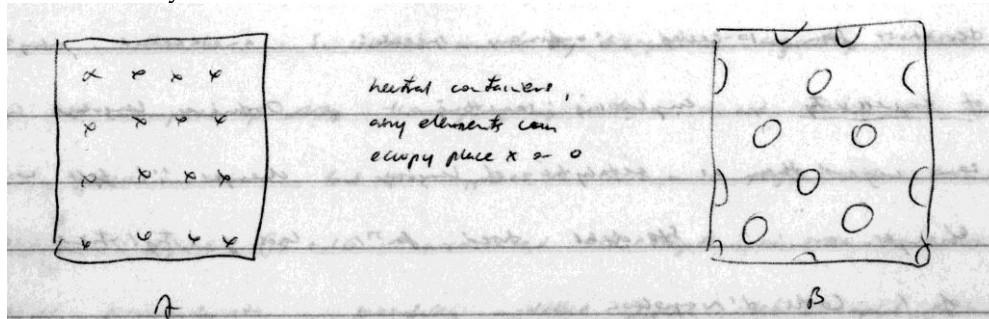
Compare this to “Stylistics” in literature. During the last 50 years in France and Germany, these have been seen as a property of language, for example, by changing your syntax from “He fell down” to “Down he fell,” that is, by deviations from so-called “ordinary speech,” by accent, rhythms, you introduce elements of style. These are *mechanisms of expressivity*, means of emphasizing something. Ordinary language has such stylistics, which some regard as catalytic of language, such that language changes because of felt contents, affective changes. Stendahl strove for the lack of stylistics used in the language of the Code d’Napoleon.<sup>48</sup>

In *Art and Illusion*,<sup>49</sup> Gombrich advances a “schema of representation” encompassing Egyptian, Greek, Modern art. But what of non-representational art, abstract painting, and buildings with cross-media style features? How would Gombrich incorporate architecture? Perhaps through the proportion of parts, the schema of construction. What is a schema? This is too inclusive a term, because there is much in artworks that is not stylistic. Schema is a diagram, a reductive representation, and a use of symbols that are “like” the object they represent. But this is a formal structure that leaves out the expressiveness of the work. Schema *of what?* Maybe only a schema of what we perceive in the work, compared to a schema in the artwork of the observation represented. Gombrich does not see this problem. A norm of what is real is required here.

TS: Are schema instantial diagrams or are they like the intensional structures that generate a sentence?

MS: When we examine handwriting, we can exhibit styles but not share the schema. The ideas that one’s life-style is unified to one’s art style—there are people like this, but is it true for all? When we examine a whole page of handwriting, another style situation occurs. The same goes for a chapter and a whole book of handwriting. Constructive and physiognomic features make Gombrich’s notion dubious.

*Schema*: symbols, maps, electronic diagrams. Is a style a schema in this sense? Is style a set of principles from which a great number of individual works can be generated? Style is not a schema, but our description of it could be given schematically, thus:



48 Stendhal, *The Red and the Black*, transl. Joan Charles, Garden City, NY: International Collector’s Library, 1949

49 Ernst Hans Gombrich, *Art and Illusion. A Study in the Psychology of Pictorial Representation*, 4th ed., London: Phaidon, 1972



Neutral containers, any elements can occupy “x” or “o.”

Neutral representations. Structural features may be common to all works but not specific to any individual work, which would not exhibit it clearly.

Wallpaper pattern might be compared to patterning in painting, for example, where pattern is usually an integrative form, not repeated again and again in the work. Anthropologists neglect this difference when they speak of the pattern of a culture (for example, Ruth Benedict<sup>50</sup>). Pattern should be understood as an ordering principle by which unlike things can work together. It is more than a mode of relating things simply, more than a repetition of parts.

### 8. 21 March 1973 Style [Practice, Meaning, Interpretation]

*Diagnostic* style features such as those emphasized by Morelli<sup>51</sup> are important for attribution of authorship, but tell us nothing about the character or quality of the work.

Thus we need to explore the *aesthetic/evaluative aspects of style*. Constant features enter into the constitution of the work qua art: sometimes these become value grounds, we want to be with the work again and again. Perception of constancies of the structure of the artist’s work. The Elgin marbles were relevant to an early controversy regarding the Greeks’ “infelicities.” Benjamin Robert Hayden—who was a laborious, quasi-Romantic painter—said that even a fragment of the marbles would be great, that there was a quality of finesse, subtlety in every part of the work.<sup>52</sup> Note the contrast with the usual way of seeing Greek work as beautiful above all in its proportions. This is a *microconcept* of style, based on an organic concept of the artwork. There is confusion here between the organic as merely uniform and as a multiple unity of different parts—the first is also true of the inorganic. Organicity is to do with the whole, not the parts, unless the whole is previously known.

The twentieth century increasingly emphasizes this microconcept of style. Our style concepts are constructed in the practice of art at a given moment. Artists and critics find concepts, descriptors in the process of making, for example, the use of concepts such as linear/painterly by Wölfflin, or sculptural/painterly in the eighteenth century. Any general theory of style has to allow for *two* historically and expressively connected aesthetics (ways of making art) being possible--into which any art style could be fitted. The Rubeniste-Poussinist controversy about the norms

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50 Ruth Benedict, *Patterns of Culture*, Boston, New York: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1934

51 Giovanni Morelli, *Italian Painters: Critical Studies of Their Works*, transl. Constance Jocelyn Ffoulkes, London: J. Murray, 1892-93. See also Richard Wollheim, *Giovanni Morelli and the Origins of Scientific Connoisseurship*, London: Allen Lane, 1973, and Carlo Ginzburg, *Morelli, Freud, and Sherlock Holmes* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1983)

52 Benjamin Robert Hayden, *The Diary of Benjamin Robert Hayden*, Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 5 vols., 1960-63

of art opposed Rubens, a Flemish artist who painted in Paris, to Poussin, a Frenchman who painted in Italy. Classical/Baroque, color/form, Ancients/Moderns were opposed to each other. But during the sixteenth century a concept of progress begun to evolve, and by the seventeenth century it had crystallized. For example, Pascal argued that better worlds were possible—better people of better taste. Sir William Temple and the author Jonathan Swift debated the controversy.<sup>53</sup> Can the moderns match the past? Should we innovate at the risk of losing connection with past?

Roman art was studied for its copies of Greek art; an aesthetic based on largely absent works was created (Winckelmann). Teilhard de Chardin's idea of "Evolutionary Christianity" is merely amusing; he has a peculiar version of genesis myth.<sup>54</sup> Seventeenth century ideas of evolution, of scientific progress. Fontenelle and others expressed pride in modern discoveries, such as the printing press, gunpowder, etc. Why not also in art? St. John of Salisbury famously said: "We are dwarfs who stand on the shoulders of giants, dwarfs see further."<sup>55</sup> Poussin, who actually is a distinctive model of achievement, was described as if he were one of the Ancients.<sup>56</sup> Rubens was described as if he were an Impressionist.

In the Academy, painterly painters triumphed until the mid-eighteenth century, when neo-classicism was revived (Lessing's *Laocoön*). An order of Louis XIV encouraged great interest in the classics as models for art in contrast to what was seen as the lack of dignity of Watteau, his *petit manieur*. Taxes were heavier; the Academy tried to give dignity to authority. David and his group came at these questions from a different angle. We must not forget that Boucher and Chardin were contemporaries (note Diderot's change of language when he shifts from describing one to the other).<sup>57</sup> Polar approaches to art making as such: either one or the other, or a combination of both.

So, we can see that concepts of style depend on actual art practice. The demands of practice oblige us to reformulate our concepts of style. In the late nineteenth and early twentieth century the widespread use of the arabesque and Cubism evoked terms of reference for art works which could be applied to previous art, for example, medieval art. Cubism exploded the *microconcept* of style: this approach cannot cope with collage, the lack of homogeneity of style in Picasso. Collage implies that the artist's hand is not always in every part of the work, he uses other materials

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53 Arthur E. Case, "Swift and Sir William Temple—a Conjecture," *Modern Language Notes*, vol. 60, no. 4, Apr., 1945, pp. 259-265

54 Pierre Teilhard de Chardin, *Christianity and Evolution*, New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1971

55 John of Salisbury, *The Metalogicon of John of Salisbury: A Twelfth-Century Defense of the Verbal and Logical Arts of the Trivium*, transl. Daniel D McGarry, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1955, p. 167. This statement, a favorite aphorism of Newton's, is also sourced to Bernard of Chartres; see Robert King Merton, *On the Shoulders of Giants: A Shandean Postscript*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1965

56 Nicolas Poussin, *Blind Orion Searching for the Rising Sun*, 1658, Oil on canvas; 46 7/8 x 72 in. (119.1 x 182.9 cm), Metropolitan Museum of Art

57 Denis Diderot, *Salons*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 3 vols, 1975-83

(compare the eighteenth century use of “quotations” in poems). Style does not any longer mean a fixed sense; style does not follow directly from the artist himself but the work is unified at a deeper level or idiosyncratically (Picasso). Style cannot cope with this problem diagnostically, but may be able to do so aesthetically.

Older style concepts were based on the constancy of artists such as Giotto. Modern art has extra freedom. Nor can it be dismissed as an exceptional or “crisis period” (see first lecture). The universalizing of art during the nineteenth century was based on the belief that certain things are common to all art—not style—but the requirements of unity and expressiveness. Problematic here, we have to accept the tentative, incomplete character of our concepts. They are not altogether arbitrary concepts, because they are pegged into experience at some point, and they react to the demands of practice.

Systematic efforts to characterize styles, such as that of Riegl, were all influenced by the works contemporary with them, but we test them by their adequacy over the whole scale (to be dealt with later).

How small need the sample be to see the genius, stylistically, of, for example, Shakespeare? What sense could we make of someone citing Shakespeare as saying “What?” The micro details of paintings, word counts of writers, etc: we do not actually read such things when we read the book, we do not read for diagnostic measurement techniques. Nevertheless, no matter what we say of a work, we have to be able to point to it in the work, whether intentionally known by the artist or not.

Statistical literary study, such as that by Giroaud on French poets, defines individual styles as a deviation from the norm, *écart*. Ordinary speech counts are compared to written word counts to produce style definitions. But painters deviate from the norms all the time: this tells us nothing about the work aesthetically. What is this norm in painting, sculpture and architecture? Are norm-conforming works without style? Statistics can only give indicators of an artist’s interests—in Gide “placidemont,” in Mallarmé “blue.” This relates to the conventional view of style: if a work displays very unusual features it is said to have “style.” But we will learn much more from the aesthetic view of the art than the statistical.

Roman Jakobson, “On the verbal art of William Blake and other poet painters.” *Linguistic Inquiry*, 1 (1970).<sup>58</sup>

*Questions of interpretation / meaning* may be seen as the province of iconography and iconology in art history. But this approach is limited, depending as it does on extracting ideas from texts and applying them to pictures, etc. Meaning is a broader matter, with three key senses: i) representation, symbolizing, ii) structural, and iii) genetic.

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58 Roman Jakobson, “On the Verbal Art of William Blake and Other Poet-Painters,” *Linguistic Inquiry*, vol.1, no.1, Jan., 1970, pp. 3-23

i) Meaning, in the first place, is that which is identified through a title or label, for example, *Adoration of the Magi*, then matched with the Gospels, or with one's general knowledge of the attributes of certain figures. This is difficult to apply to architecture, even though it contains elements of symbolism. Subjects such as Baptisms, the Resurrection of Christ three days after the Crucifixion are representations, but not wholly representations, as they are also symbolic.

ii) What is the meaning of this line, or of separating the upper and lower parts, why no frame on this painting? Answering questions of type i) mean that we look for connectors *outside* the picture, whereas, for answers to question of type ii) one looks more closely *into* the picture, calling on past experience of painting, for example, this line balances these two color masses.

iii) Why was this work made? Why was this man painted? We look outside the work for similar intentions, functions, and aims. History, sociology, psychology, and context. Corollary: We can see the artwork's role in the culture, for example, the Parthenon's role in Periclean and post-Periclean Greek culture.

To do good iconography, we have to see the whole context. We might overemphasize one iconographic matching, and thus mistake the configuration; for example, in a manuscript in the Metropolitan Museum, the Cloisters, the angels holding up the Virgin's house, in itself, seems like the Loreto miracle story, but throughout the manuscript all buildings are held up by all manner of people. Similarly, we must know the position of a painting in the church. The same image might serve different functions; for example, Daniel in the den may be a priest bringing a wafer to St Ursula. In abstract art, a red blot might balance other colors rather than operate symbolically or expressively. Methodologically, we should work i), ii), and iii) together whenever we seek knowledge. Expressive components are different from iconography. Communication and information theory (message/noise, input/output, coding/decoding), teach us that the message is transmitted against the background noise; clarity requires redundancy and repetition to be clear, in order to avoid the overlapping of similar components of two messages.

Is all art intended as a communication? Does a whole building communicate? It may convey a message about the wealth of the owner. Ledoux's "speaking architecture" contained signs evoking something about the owner, but what if he had to build a house for an architect? To say that a building is a representation is to confuse iii) and ii) into the claim for i).

Is abstract painting communicative? A painting presenting, expressing the most general characteristics of being, such as power, etc. and the norms of qualities such as straightness, roundness, etc. (Dewey felt that this gives art a metaphysical

status.<sup>59</sup> Compare this to the belief that logical statements exhibit the general features of experience, such as contradiction, the excluded middle, etc. But to Nagel everything one says about the world is contingent—that is, open to change, yet some logical statements claim to be uncontingent.<sup>60</sup> A problem.) Abstract art offers not a message, but rather an expression. This is the distinction between overt speech and involuntary expression. Communication has to differ from nature—is nature communicating to you? Metaphorically perhaps, but not really. Why can an artist not be making something parallel to a carpenter making a chair, with no communication intended? A football game is analogous to art without communication. (Corot said: “I paint for the little birds,” and Barnett Newman said: “Aesthetics is to painting what ornithology is to the birds.”) Performance, making an object for use—added to this, communication introduces the extra element of message. The analogy between art and games is limited, because in games the rules are known by both players and spectators.

Communication, when taken as necessary, gets too demanding on the artist, there are accusations of failure, of not doing his duty. Communication sets up a normative model.

Information theory models tend to lose sight of this fact: when a message is sent it contains many features extra to the final message, whereas the valuable work of art is believed to count all over, every part of it. Repetition in art compared to repeating to get message across, in contrast to noise, background is relevant in artwork. When a linguist speaks of messages his largest unit is the sentence. All artworks are larger than a sentence. The poet is interested in larger entities than the units of the linguist; he uses a different scale and set of constraints than the linguist. Exceptions: Chinese painting contains messages from the owners of the painting—it does not correspond with our notion of an integral unity, of the whole, as something with which one cannot interfere. Prehistoric cave painting abounds in superimposition, because there was no idea of permanence or the isolation of parts. This leads us to imagine style change in subway graffiti: what an idea! [Schapiro becomes uncontrollably amused at this thought, so much so he cannot go on with the lecture.]

### 9. 28 March 1973 [Semiotics of Art – Verbal and Pictorial Meaning]

In previous lectures we discussed, and applied, hermeneutics, the science of *interpretation*. We noted Alexandrian, Medieval and later interpretations of Homer, the Bible, and other texts and images. What was meant? What meaning can be given to overcome anomalies and repugnant beliefs? The search for meanings and a certain sort of order are intertwined. In literature, this developed into close reading, detailed empirical scrutiny, in the New Criticism, which emphasized analysis. When examining the fake documents of the Middle Ages, language analysis was

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<sup>59</sup> John Dewey, *Art as Experience*, New York: Minton, Balch & Company, 1934

<sup>60</sup> Ernest Nagel and James B. Newman, *Gödel's Proof*, New York: New York University Press, 1938

used to sort out the genuine. Historical documents depend on this—thus hermeneutics deals with the anomalies of contradictions in canonical authors.

Dilthey advanced a history of interpreting, of interpretation.<sup>61</sup> We might take this up by asking these questions about meaning in works of art:

- i) What is represented, said?
- ii) How does a given element function within the painting?
- iii) How does it come about that i) and/or ii) were done? [TS: the third question is, therefore, why were i) and ii) done the way they were?]

Knowing when or where the work was made helps us interpret it in particular ways—idea 'x' is impossible because it did not arise until later because of "y." These are three important concepts of meaning, but not the only ones.

Last week we discussed communication, information theory, the ideas of background noise, entropy, in relation to meaning being discerned. Structural analysis depends on much from information theory. But there are two problems: first, not all works are communicative, and not all elements in communicative works are communicative, for example, architecture, music, ceramics, furniture, calligraphy have many simply functional elements. To pick out manifestations of the author in the work, it is not necessary for us to see many works. Intentions can be seen, but works of art are not purposive in all cases, in all their aspects. Second, in information theory, there is a message heard or seen against background noise, whereas in art there is usually a focussing of attention, with a maximum of message and a minimum of noise. Everything works in a work of art and is essential to the meaning. Redundancy is important for communication (repetition) in information theory, compared to painting where everything is operative. Excess is deplorable unless it is itself expressive—as it is, for example, in Rabelais's novels.

TS: Your usage of the concept of information seems like that of Carnap,<sup>62</sup> which is built around sentence structure. What about the ideas of Shannon, and others, which emphasize quantitative information?<sup>63</sup>

A: The latter is not a good model. Linguists study phonemes, morphemes, sentences, phrases, and clauses. But a poem is larger than these, and is subject to constraints and closed forms. Gestalt psychologists project simple images, much reduced, as their objects of analysis, yet most artworks, except recently, are more complex. Invariant models like symmetry, drawn from mathematics, are inadequate. In an artwork, such as Charles Demuth's *I Saw the Figure 5 in Gold*

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61 Wilhelm Dilthey, *Patterns and Meaning in History. Thoughts and History and Society*, New York: Harper and Row, 1962

62 Rudolf Carnap, *Meaning and Necessity: A Study in Semantics and Modal Logic*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1956

63 Claude Elwood Shannon and Warren Weaver, *The Mathematical Theory of Communication*, Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1949

(1928),<sup>64</sup> the “5,” being in a nonfigurative field, is different from any other 5. Psychologists’ models are smaller in scale.

Roman Jakobsen has seen structural categories in Blake’s poems and paintings, treating the artwork as a stylistic ensemble of tiny elements. Morosov also. But stochastic analysis does not get you to the aesthetic qualities of the work. Information models based on qualitative elements only are relevant to minor aspects of the artwork.

We can approach a semiotics of art through the theory of signs. This was set out by Charles Sanders Peirce, a Bohemian professor, who could not hold a job for more than a few years. He divided the sign into three components:

- i) *indexical* signs, for example, smoke indicates fire.
- ii) *iconic*, for example, footprints, a sign that looks like a foot and tells us that someone has passed by. All pictures are iconic in this sense. The term “icon” is normally used for religious art, but here we have to cope with two meanings. The relationship is one of resemblance, of a connection, or likeness, being recognized.
- iii) *symbolic*, that is, arbitrary signs. In Plato’s *Crytalis*, Socrates asks: “Do words sound like what they represent?” Some words were mimetic, but there is a much greater usage of non-mimetic words. Compare opaque and transparent words (you can derive the former from its parts, not the latter).

Some people believe that the order of the sentence is iconic with regards to its object, for example, plural words are longer. This is not so in most languages, but poets have shown a pattern of order in both a poem and the poem’s subject. So, there is an important interplay between ii) and iii).

During the early Christian period, in sacred books, every word and letter had profound meaning, more than its place in a sentence. In the Jewish Kabbala, a word has a necessary connection with its subject; God created the pen first, in the sense that the names of things were dictated and then the things came into existence. The early Christians believed everything pointed to a deeper meaning. St Augustine perceived an anti-Aristotelian arbitrariness: “A sign is a thing which beyond the appearance it presents to senses brings something other than itself to mind.”<sup>65</sup> Was this insight an exception to prevailing attitudes?

Association needs to be added to Peirce’s list. If we think of a person, we think of something he did, but he is not necessarily a sign for this thing. Whenever we hear “Roosevelt,” we think of FDR, but the connection might not be there. Abstract or non-figurative imagery in art—are these signs? They are meaningful, but not

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64 Charles Demuth, *The Figure 5 in Gold* (1928). Oil on cardboard, 35 ½ x 30 in. Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York.

65 “...a sign is something which is itself sensed and which indicates to the mind something beyond the sign itself.”—Saint Augustine, *de dialectica*, transl. Belford Darrell Jackson, Dordrecht, Boston: D. Reidel Pub. Co., 1975, chapter V, Signification.

necessarily signs. Does Mark Tobey think of his 'calligraphic' models as signs? Mathieu's paintings with their allusions to signatures, to signing one's name—are these signs? Or even Louis XIV's signature, with its elaborate serifs, is it expressive in the way that the word "Louis" is expressive of Louis himself? Some words acquire new meanings because their aesthetic form is so promising.

*Verbal signs compared to iconic signs.* Meanings other than mimetic ones dominate 90% of words, but some grammars are mimetic. The word "house," compared to a diagram, offers no connection between word and image. A reductive drawing of house is conventional, and adding or taking away features changes the type of house—nearly every component has a purpose. And in an iconic sign you do not need all the sign to convey the idea (therefore it is not completely mimetic), whereas in a word you do, otherwise it means something else. For example, a diagram of a human face signifies even with the most minimal indication. As you increase the indicators, further meanings will be quickly attracted. Recognizability is essential to this. Nelson Goodman, in his *Languages of Art*,<sup>66</sup> denies resemblance as sufficient ground for a sign or indication. Recognizing the intention to create resemblances is sometimes difficult. Iconicity is vague in that people talk to themselves or draw resemblance of objects without the desire to communicate. In ordinary behavior, we depend on cues from the world for distance—size, for example, or perspective, which is reliable for far distance, but unreliable for a bent stick in water. So, simple configurations can serve as signs unless they contain a cue serving to indicate another thing (for example, a person at a distance might be green, that is, a bronze sculpture). So we can ask many questions about this relationship.

In the past few years, the word "Amerika" has conveyed a special idea of this country.

Sacred names in medieval art, such as DS PNS SPS XC, work as contractions. Others work as abbreviations by suspension, for example, "quib" is "quibus." Contracted sacred names, such as "Adanoi" for "Jehovah" was done because one had to avoid direct pronunciation of the name of God.

Let us compare signs belonging to art and the sign when merely conventional. Artists have been fascinated by analogies to mathematics, for example, often reminding us of mathematical illustration. The difference is that the mathematician does not care how he draws the diagram, because the proof does not depend on exactness of drawing, it is merely an illustration. "Let *this* be a square, then all sides are equal, etc." A painter, however, worries about placing, size, proportion to other shapes, variations in drawing lines, that is, all have expressive purposes, in the artwork every little element counts for meaning and significance. I have tested children on their affective readings of various geometric forms; for example, children read squares as "like" themselves, and see God as an infinite circle.

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66 Nelson Goodman, *Languages of Art. An Approach to a Theory of Symbols*, London: Oxford University Press, 1969



“Closed,” “perfect,” “regular” squares contrast to “open,” “rough,” “irregular” ones—these have associations to personality.

Recognizing a circle with signs in it for eyes, nose and mouth as a human face [Schapiro draws a schematic diagram] will be accompanied by feelings about what kind of a face this is compared to others. We are very acute in responding to the slightest changes in these lines and their positioning. [Schapiro draws the lines for the features lower down in the “circle.”] Physiognomics of the facial features are a model for the concerns of the artist. This is also true of the proportions of a building façade. In great art we are constantly impressed by the complexity of relating parts to the whole.

The determination of meaning shifts in different art works that treat the same subject. “Subject” in the nineteenth century meant “literary subject.” “Theme” was used for an element or part; “content” means the subject, plus the vision of the world implied, etcetera.

Moving from verbal to pictorial meanings: translating cannot be complete between both. Goethe said the opposite, that test of the work is how it survives translation. There is the idea that the best translation of a painting is a poem, not a prose description, but a kind of writing that is equally elusive. We might say, in parenthesis, that philosophy is too abstract to encompass the world, but art can unify both the abstract and the concrete. For example, in *Exodus* 17:9-13, there is the story of Moses holding up his arms to guarantee the victory of the Israelites against the Amalekites. Picturing this theme depends on factors extra to the original text. Current styles of representation govern the way the text is read. Ideological and stylistic modifiers operate on a text through time and place.<sup>67</sup>

There are two ways of dealing with meaning. The literal “Antioch school” approach compared to the historical, mystical or moral, perspective. Such a fourfold interpretation was typical of Middle Ages, for example, the Utrecht Psalter illustration to Psalm 43 (44) shows God in bed, “the enemy at the gate” is literally represented (*Words and Pictures*, fig. 1), whereas the original descriptor was metaphorical. Another example is the Middle Ages practice of setting Old Testament motifs alongside New Testament motifs. History for these authors was teleological, guided towards divine plan; this is a messianic view of the Old Testament. A thirteenth century image of Isaac carrying the faggots, such as one from the Moralized Bible in the Bodleian Library, Oxford, shows Isaac as prefiguring Christ carrying the cross: the faggots are in a cross shape (*Words and Pictures*, fig. 2).

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67 Meyer Schapiro, *Words and Pictures. On the Literal and Symbolic in the Illustration of a Text*, The Hague: Mouton, 1973, Chapter 2, 17ff

In the Exodus story, Moses triumphed, we are told, because he made the sign of the cross. Joshua first appeared here, and it is the Hebrew name for Jesus. Thus it also means victory, the victory of Christianity.

In a fifteenth century mosaic in the nave of Sta. Maria Maggiore, there is a representation that does not agree with the biblical text. In the Bible, the rod of God strikes water from a rock, holds back the Red Sea. This rod was preserved in the Royal Place in Constantinople. In this work, however (as the text specifies), not one but *both* hands are raised to hold back the sea (*Words and Pictures*, fig. 4). Then, in later bibles the translations were changed to the plural and the idea of the rod given up, forgotten. Thus, Moses was fitted into the role of predicting Christianity.

Raising your hands in prayer evokes the image of Christ. There are many images of Daniel in the lion's den, in the Roman catacombs, adopting a cross posture (*Words and Pictures*, fig. 6). It is also based on the classical pose of the hero.

In the Middle Ages, in the ninth century *Homilies of Gregory Nazianzen*, Moses is shown with Aaron holding up his arms (*Words and Pictures*, fig. 8). From the seventh century onwards, leaders in battle constantly appealed to Moses' example, and priests were asked to keep their arms raised. Moses was the model of a victorious theocratic leader. In the eleventh and twelfth centuries, the Holy Roman Empire and Charlemagne were in dialogue: "I will fight for you if you keep your hands up," "I will, if you support the church, that is, my arms." The raised hands became a Church-State theme, an image of unity. In an eleventh century image in the Library of the Staatsbibliothek, Munich, Emperor Henry II is crowned by Christ, while two bishops/saints hold up his arms (*Words and Pictures*, fig. 10).

From thirteenth century Paris, from the 1220s, there is an image of Moses praying, with his hands held up by Aaron and Hur. This is a Jewish counter-representation of the theme: it is an "inhibitory symbol," deliberately un-Christian (British Museum, *Words and Pictures*, fig. 13).

There is a parallel in the Book of Genesis, when Jacob comes to Egypt to see Joseph, and he blesses his grandsons on his death-bed. Jacob crosses his hands and gives his blessing the other way around, his right hand going to Ephraim. The Jews said that this indicates that he was looking to the future. Christians say it proves the forthcoming Crucifixion, and that the blessing of the younger son fits Christianity rather than Judaism. (*Words and Pictures*, figs. 23, 24). At Dura in 425 AD, in the synagogue, the Jews there represented the incident *without* any hand crossing (*Words and Pictures*, fig. 16). This is evidence against the Christian view, or at least implies that a modification was felt to be necessary.

In the Psalter of St. Louis, from the 1220s, in Paris, there is an image of Moses shown from the side—a new sign for prayer. In an eleventh century epic, Moses is engaged, in his separate space, in his form of the battle. He is represented as "He" rather than an "I," no longer such a hero but a worker, like a soldier (*Words and Pictures*, fig. 17).

Another Moses image in the Moralized Bible in the Bodleian Library, shows a bishop conducting mass with his hands in prayer held up by the father and the son (*Words and Pictures*, fig. 20). The congregation thus can witness victory over evil. So the symbol has changed from predicting Christ on the cross, to symbolizing the mass celebration of good versus evil. During the fourteenth century, the emerging secular process tends to minimize Moses' role. A contemporary philosopher said that the Old Testament was only in an analogous relationship to the New. We can conclude that representational styles are not technical but depend on general attitudes of a period.

#### 10. 4 April, 1973 [Semiotics of Art – Meaning and Form]

Last week: A single theme, represented through time, was interpreted and explained on grounds larger than those of the words of the original text on which it was ostensibly based. Of course, the text may not have been homogenous, for example, the Bible was oral for three centuries, and even when it became canonical its reading remained subject to interpretation.

Recovering the original meaning is difficult because of distance in time, and our tendency to be selective of features congenial to our own interests. Successive generations bring new ideas. We can only achieve a certain range of interpretation, but this is not, compared to natural science, a subjectivist form of knowledge. Imagination is constrained by the need to correspond to a set of observables. Our selecting these observables is tricky, but we can refine our selection.

Artworks that take on the task of representing current ideas are subject to the same demands as science, which is itself a representation of the world.

We noted last week the introduction of an image of prayer, a sign that by joining the hands canceled out the cross image. Praying figures became figures in action. This was typical of a growing tendency towards the diminution of themes of state (for example, the hero, a state-idea) in favor of themes of action. "I" = Christ = in stasis = from the front. "He" = in action = profile. This becomes important in the Middle Ages.

The subject of the Adoration of the Magi requires the artist to represent the Magi in contrast to Mary. In a twelfth century example at St. Gilles-du-Gard, the Virgin is enthroned in a niche of her own. She becomes an iconic figure, a sacred image, and a type of cult image. In contrast, the Magi are shown in depth and profile, the angels also (*Words and Pictures*, fig. 27). Compare this to figures from Neuilly-en-Donjon, a tympanum showing the Virgin and angels in profile, dynamically over two serpents/fish (*Words and Pictures*, fig. 27a). Or we might consider representations of the Daniel story, such as one from 780 AD, a Spanish manuscript (*Words and Pictures*, fig. 28). In the earliest representations, the disposition of figures is symmetrical and their arms are raised. This is a faux-Arabic image.

In the eleventh century in Southern France, Romanesque representations show figures in profile but there is a lack of symmetry. Habbakuk is bringing the bread, carried by the angel (*Words and Pictures*, fig. 29). Action is conceived differently, it converts a biblical event into a theme of state.

Both profile and frontal viewpoints are used for different reasons. There are different qualities of expression latent in each one. Frontal is direct communication, confrontational at times, whereas profile is the world observed by us without it knowing, and thus implies “objectivity.”

Consider this eleventh century image of Raganaldus blessing his clergy and laity (*Words and Pictures*, fig. 26). It is from a book that explains the structure of this church, its hierarchy of rank. Hierarchy of place in a field is important: whether a figure is to the left, or to the right, or closer to the border. Clustering occurs according to an organizational chart. Out of this notion of hierarchy a formal conception emerges; for example, closeness to the center makes you the boss. The key figures at top and center are frontal, the less important ones are shown in half-view, the lowest in profile. In life, crowds assemble themselves in pictorial hierarchy, as it were. Elevated positions for kings, who typically wear a crown and do not turn their heads left or right. (See Alferdi on dress, posture, etc., in the Roman world.) This is a mixture of art as a living experience and as arbitrary invention.

The profile/frontal variation is a means of conveying the polarity of values. In Greek art the profile is favored to convey action, to contribute to narrative, for example, in red figure vase painting. When the frontal face is introduced, it is a shock. The scene of Maenads offering gifts to Dionysus, on a Greek vase in the Museo Nazionale, Naples, fifth century, is actually a simulation of Dionysus, showing him as a fetish, and thus depends on the polarity between living/artificial, sacred/profane (*Words and Pictures*, fig. 30). Another vase, in the National Museum, Athens, of a mother playing with child shows these two in profile, whereas the servant is frontal, because she is marginal (*Words and Pictures*, fig. 31).

In representations of Christ and the Apostles, particularly the Last Supper, the disciples are typically shown in frontal or 3/4 position, whereas Judas is the only one in profile. Or vice-versa. Whichever, Judas marked as an outsider. In this case, emphasis on the profile amounts to caricature, possibly to emphasize the nose. The contrast is indented and projected. Perhaps there are inhibitions on eye-to-eye projection, where it might imply aggressive intent on the part of the artist?

The profile/frontal variation has the potential to carry all other possible contrasts. We see this in works as diverse as Titian's *Danäe*, in works by Munch that use a frontal portrait with low relief profile of a previous member of the family (in white), or a father and son—this calls on our lived experience of the differences. Vuillard's interior, *The Artists's Mother and Sister* (c.1900, MoMA) shows the old mother frontally, the retiring daughter in profile. Goya's portrait of himself undergoing a

heart attack, but saved by his surgeon (Minneapolis Museum), is revelatory via frontal images. In Truffaut's film *Four Hundred Blows*, there is a scene where a key actor turns back from water to look directly at us. In Giotto's *Kiss of Judas* in the Arena Chapel, all figures are in profile, Judas and Jesus are shown in an exchange of unspoken thought, their two heads the centerpiece of a cinematic rotation of heads around Judas and Christ. This dynamicizes the profile as a point of movement of the head. Previously, Judas as shown on the side, kissing the unnoticing Jesus.

Consider the question of form. Can line, form, and color be the carriers of quality independent of meaning, intentions, subject, and iconography? Flaubert spoke of writing a novel based on the color yellow. Melville's Ahab had a dream of a painting all of one color. That music as a non-mimetic art is a well-known idea. In the twentieth century, representation has been given up as a major goal of art. Parallels are drawn to the non-empirical, "non-designatory" content in pure mathematics. But this is true neither for math nor for abstract art.

The word "abstract" has a variety of meanings:

- i) "non-objectivity," nothing represented.
- ii) to represent general features of the world—form in general, space in general, etc.
- iii) simplified forms resembling geometric forms, flatness of the background, that is, repression of identification with a part of the world (for example, the yellow background in Van Gogh's *L'Arlessienne*).
- iv) every mark in the painting counts for meaning, whereas a mathematician's diagram can be given in any way. Abstract painting is concrete and specific; there is no "noise" (in contrast to science, math, and communication theory).

Phony comparisons have been made between Cubism and Quantum mechanics. This is "night school" philosophy. When questioned by Schapiro, Sigfried Gideon<sup>68</sup> did not know the physics that he compared Cubism to. When he was asked about the parallel, Einstein said, "shit."

Abstraction in painting is different from abstraction in science, math and in general knowledge. There are only metaphorical links to "abstractness" as a quality, thus you could read painting as the outcome of a process of measurement, exactitude, etc., and the mathematical as a "quality," a "look" rather than part of the content of the work.

For example, in his *Self Portrait* of 1913 de Chirico juxtaposed two plaster casts of feet crossed over each other, an egg, a rod (a rolled up drawing?), an inscribed X and two "chimney stacks." One cast is cut by the frame, the other is shown cut off. Of the two chimneys in the background, one is cut by the frame and the other finishes within the painting. The top point of the X ends at the frame, or its other points indicate a central mark and a corner. The X is not related to objects, but signs,

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68 Sigfried Gideon, *Mechanization Takes Command*, New York: Norton, 1948

it signifies “unknown quantity,” or “cross.” This points us to the duality common throughout the work. X is the “metaphysical” symbol of the self as conflicted, dual and mysterious in structure. There is no way of verifying exactly what the work is about.<sup>69</sup> We might compare it to a later *Self Portrait*, of which de Chirico said: “What shall I love if not the metaphysics of things?”<sup>70</sup> In this one, the artist’s self image is tied to the image of the colonnade. In Picasso’s *Head of Woman*, there is also a lot of pairing and crossing, but this has seemingly nothing to do with physiologicistic interpretation. No one characteristic will capture the *whole* of the painting.

In Chagall’s *I and the Village*,<sup>71</sup> the diagonal lines and boundaries between peasant and calf are a device owed to Cubism, in which lines could be traced freely as marks scrambling the structure of planes rather than be well-ordered sets in a metrical space. Cubist crossing of lines, and painting up to the edges, does this, but Cubism had its own requirements for balanced composition. Chagall’s big X gives scrambled depth to communication between cow and peasant, blossoms, fragrance, animals as a smelling creature, affection, a woman milling, and male and female peasants tied together. His drawing of a circle around the points of the X is a magical device for enclosing. Thus the village has horses upside down. This is a meaningful abstraction, not a representation but a sign ordering a range of associations with the imagery.<sup>72</sup>

In Picasso’s *Artist and Model* of 1927, note the face depicted on the canvas, on the easel in the center: this is projective in a psychological sense, not that of geometry. *Jour d’esprit*. The painter’s hand holding the brush creates a man-brush, and a brush-canvas. In the *Weeping Woman* painting of 1937, related to *Guernica*, Picasso shows the pain internalized inside the woman’s head; her eyelashes become pricks to the eyes, ears reversed, internalized, proreceptive. He was acquainted with anatomical pictures of the nervous system, in which the eye nerves are crossed. Here he uses this as a means of intensifying the imagery of pain. This exemplifies the Cubist freedom towards all forms.

In Kandinsky’s *Black Lines* in the Guggenheim Museum, the crossings are painted and drawn in ink. They seem to be nerve lines when compared to the mood of color patches and expressionistic devices picked up by Picasso in the last example.

On the interpretation of artworks by reference to unconscious motivations. Artists have realized this since Montaigne. How does one validate artworks if they are unconscious? Can we posit a theorem: if x appears in the work, then it is the result

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69 For a more extensive discussion, see Meyer Schapiro, “Philosophy and Worldview in Painting,” in Meyer Schapiro, *Worldview in Painting—Art and Society, Selected Papers*, New York: George Braziller, 1999, pp. 24-5

70 Giorgio de Chirico, *Self-Portrait* [Et quid amabo nisi quod aenigma est? (“What shall I love if not the enigma?”)], 1911

71 Marc Chagall, *I and the Village*, 1911, oil on canvas, 6’ 3 5/8” x 59 5/8” (192.1 x 151.4 cm), MoMA, New York

72 Schapiro writes at greater length about Chagall in his *Modern Art, 19th & 20th Centuries*, London: Chatto & Windus, 1978, pp. 121-134

of unconscious processes? Take the case of the representation of apples by Cézanne. Why so many? Just because they were spheres, close to pure forms? No, they were not neutral; rather, they were involved with pleasure/evil/etc. for him. How does Cézanne in particular use apples? In large numbers, or by obsessively repeating one apple? In his painting *The Judgement of Paris* (actually *The Amorous Shepherd*) 1883-5 the main male figure gives to the smallest of the girls a whole armful of apples. We know that Cézanne loved Latin poetry and read Virgil's *Eclogues*,<sup>73</sup> but there is no reference in them specifically to so many apples. In the elegies of Propertius,<sup>74</sup> however, there is a story of the love of a girl won by the gift of ten apples. But why do apples appear in his still lifes?<sup>75</sup>

### 11. 11 April 1973 [Psychology and Art]

Why did Cézanne paint apples at certain times and places? Courbet, in prison in 1871, painted gigantic apples. I showed last week that in his *The Judgement of Paris*, or better, *The Amorous Shepherd*, Cézanne drew from elegies by Propertius. OK, so this is why he paints apples. But why place them in a still life? In the 1968 *Art News Annual*,<sup>76</sup> I argued that the still life allowed him a psychological displacement; the apple was identified with sexuality. Zola in his novel *L'Œuvre*,<sup>77</sup> draws analogies between fruit and the serving girl, whereas in theory the artist figure (Frenhofer; with whom Cézanne identified) says that still life is neutral. Would such a still-life displacement have taken place in the fifteenth century? No, the still life has to be developed as a genre before such displacement can occur. Thus we can discern meaning in three ways: i) accurate description; ii) knowledge of the artist's reading, temperament, etc.; iii) repression, with subsequent displacement (non-religious, allegorical symbolism); iv) if unconscious tendencies, the historical question becomes: why is still life the carrier of meaning and not, say, landscape?

In the eighteenth and nineteenth century, schools of painting—from Chardin to kitsch—people were represented in their absence or by association with flowers, cards, and objects on the table related to casual pleasures, etc. All these were indicators of distinctive individual choices. But together, these objects became mobile, manipulable, they satisfy senses, or belong to a position, that is, they amount to values in the world. Poets use tables, and personal objects. Philosophers, too, in their conception of “sedentary mentalism,” of thinking at the desk.

But displacement functions are inadequate to explain everything about the use of still life subjects. Manet paints oysters, Renoir open melons, Picasso the guitar (indeed, he got upset at Rousseau painting a guitar). Artists adopt attitude to

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73 Virgil, *Virgil's Eclogues*, transl. Len Krisak, Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2010

74 Sextus Propertius, *The Elegies of Propertius*, transl. E H W Meyerstein, London: Oxford University Press, 1935

75 See Schapiro's essay “The Apples of Cézanne: An Essay on the Meaning of Still-life,” *Art News Annual*, no.34 (1968): 34-53; also in his *Modern Art, 19th & 20th Centuries*, pp.1-38

76 Ibid

77 Emile Zola, *L'Œuvre*, Paris: Charentier, 1886

subjects, for example, the disputes among the early modernists about who painted squares first. But once an object represents a real choice by the artist, it becomes characteristic of him.

The fourth kind of meaning, you remember, was that of association. Cézanne's *Still life with Plaster Cast of Armor*, c. 1895, in the Courtauld Museum, London, places a statuette representing love amidst a number of apples, and connects apples with onions. It is a visual poem, connecting love with a man in agony. In his early works, Cézanne painted both clothed and nude people, for example, his *Pastoral or Luncheon on the Grass*, 1870, a picnic scene with still-life objects all around, brooding, including a tree with a clearly phallic projection. Is this an "innocent" example of an unintended giveaway, outside the emphatic areas of the painting?<sup>78</sup>

How far one can go in such interpretations is hard to say for there are no adequate ways of testing these conclusions. Our own experience is a guide. Psychological interpretation essentially is causal, no matter how uncausal it may seem. Meaning can be i) iconic, ii) have a formal purpose, be functional, and also be iii) genetic, that is, how did "x" come to be this way in painting? All these refer implicitly to causes - if "x," then there was or is "y." Cézanne's world experience was relevant to our interpretations before, but in most cases such generalities will not stand up. We hold to them because we do it in life until a contradiction comes up; we keep it up as long as we can get away with it. Special cases force us to add supplementary notions. Compare this to the situation in science: we begin from a commitment to investigation, we are committed to specific notions, that is, we cannot think through all consequences, draw on all possible reflection and wisdom, before we act. Theoretically this is extremely shaky, but when we investigate we have to think of everything, offer all plausible ideas, then correct them as we go on.

When we look at buildings, we don't worry much about the personality of those involved, but we can, if we wish, see it in our own time. We make a guess from the building as to the character of the architect.

We make psychological assumptions when we experience the physiognomy of art works. Certain shapes we call "violent," and we can distinguish between the violence of the violent man and the violence of the peaceful man. We sense a personality at work over a whole range of work, for example, Cézanne's change from early rough works, full of revolt, to the still lifes, to a less drastic, less passion-arousing phase after the romantic violence of the earlier phase. We might say that this gives his classicism a degree of vitality, his having ordered chaos.

There are conventional psychological images of artists. For example, the idea that an inner defect inspires the artist. The artist has a wound, Melanie Klein<sup>79</sup> argues,

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78 An extended discussion of this issue may be found in Schapiro's "The Apples of Cézanne: An Essay on the Meaning of Still-life."

79 Melanie Klein, *New Directions in Psychoanalysis. The Significance of Infant Conflict in the Pattern of Adult Behaviour*, New York: Basic Books, 1956



because of his hostility to his mother, so he atones by beautifying things, making them whole. Between 1910 and 1914 Freud emphasized sublimation, but it disappeared from his views. It is an old classical notion, to be found in Catullus.<sup>80</sup> Max Scheler, in *The Nature of Sympathy*<sup>81</sup> argues that sublimation is part of women's nature.

It would be interesting to assemble these universal folk wisdoms regarding art and science. A lady once said to Casanova, when he failed to satisfy her: "Give up women and study math."

When studying neurotic, rational, and reflex behavior, psychologists chose different sets of features to observe. Asking about the range of a theory is a way of testing it: for example, Gestalt psychologists tackle perception but not meaning, thus complex objects are incompletely described. When one turns to other material, previous explanations are ignored. But we are committed to forms of cogency of argument derived from the study of uncomplex objects in the natural sciences.

Consider the manuscript image, from the Cluny Museum, Paris, *Virgin with Open Door*. The religious view is of the Virgin as a closed door, that is, a virgin. But the open door in her abdomen suggests sexual interpretation; is this an addition on the artist's part? Or consider a 1938 painting of Doubting Thomas, with his finger in Christ's wound, his arm erect. "Are you a man?" he says. "Yes," is the visual answer. Perhaps there are universal unconscious processes. Is there a psychology of art in general, and a quite different one that refers only to particular works?

Freud's first writing on art concerned Jensen's "*Gradiva*."<sup>82</sup> A girl saved a man who was disturbed, his hang-up was based on knowing the girl previously but having forgotten. It is a book about psychology, behavior, about the formation of a psychosis and the treatment of it. But Freud does not analyze the author.

Vasari's *Lives*<sup>83</sup> is full of examples of how personality enters into the work: for example, Andrea del Sarto took his wife as the Virgin. Leonardo criticizes artists who projected their own image in their art works. In the eighteenth century, style became the way a man thinks, feels and perceives. Style was distinguished by temperament. A little man makes big figures, big makes small, it is compensatory. But the same trait can be explained in quite the opposite way. Modern graphologists say small writing is a sign of scholarliness/timidity, big writing of bad eyesight, boastfulness/muscular structure of some kind, that is, lots of things. Graphology started with diplomats trying to see behind the scripts presented to them officially.

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80 Guy Lee ed., *The Complete Poems of Catullus*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1990

81 M. Schlaer, *The Nature of Sympathy*, 1953 English edition by Werner Stark, transl. Peter Heath, 5th ed. Graham McAleer, Piscataway, NJ: Transaction, 2007

82 Sigmund Freud, "Delusions and Dreams in Jensen's *Gradiva*," (1907 [1906]), *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*, vol. IX, London: Hogarth Press, 1953, pp. 7-95

83 Giorgio Vasari, *The Lives of the Artists*, Harmondsworth, New York: Penguin Books, 1987

Can one speak of the psychological trait of a culture as whole? Compared, for example, to the individual? Do all Mediterraneans speak quickly? Are the same criteria applicable to the collective and the personal trait? Abstraction as a way of evading reality, a theme in the psychology of children: is this a personal trait or the collective traits appearing in the personal situation? We cannot draw conclusions, only naïve interpretation.

On the role of personality in a work of art. "Style is the man," many artists believe this. Sainte-Beuve wrote about single literary figures, showing the peculiarity of the person in the work. Proust detested this general view and argued in *Contre Sainte-Beuve* that a writer becomes an author by surmounting his personality.<sup>84</sup> To Flaubert, God was everywhere but not observable, yet he strove to write a "seamless" work of art. A bad writer is visible in the work. Only when there is something jarring do we worry about its genetic history. Thus there are two views.

Some painters have a constant physiognomic no matter what subject they paint, for example, El Greco. It has been proposed that Giotto saw the Romanesque sculptures at Rheims between painting the Passion and the wall opposite at Padua, and thus his style became more monumental. But this is wrong because Giotto was an artist who fitted style to subject. Some painters are "objective" relative to the accepted content of the subject, others put themselves into whatever they do. Compare change in the art of Kandinsky and Mondrian. There is a typology of how artists' relations to their tasks affect the way they do it, and the subjects they choose.

In his famous essay on Leonardo's cartoon, *Virgin, Child and St Anne*, Freud tells of Leonardo remembering a dream in which the tail feathers of a vulture touched his mouth when he was a child.<sup>85</sup> Freud interprets this as indicative of the artist's repressed longing for his mother, and offers explanations of key elements of the cartoon in its light. But in 1923 McClagget showed that the text Freud relied on included a mistranslation of the word for "kite," thus it was not a "vulture" in Leonardo's dream. Freud's connection between vultures being only female, and virgin births, the unmarried mother, and thus Mary, was wrong. Freud's interpretation was a failure as explanation, but it remains a beautiful account of the mature Leonardo. Freud omits Leonardo's more evidently masculine paintings, for example, *Last Supper*.<sup>86</sup>

It was at the time a typical usage to represent allegorical figures as young. Freud did not look at what people thought at the time, nor at their attitudes to illegitimate children. Similarly, Vasari named the *Mona Lisa*, "la Gioconda" and claimed that it was a portrait of Francesca Gioconda. But "la gioconda" means "happy person" — the title has stuck because of the enigmatic smile.

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84 Marcel Proust, *Contre Sainte-Beuve*, London: Chatto & Windus, 1958

85 Freud, "Leonardo da Vinci and a Memory of his Childhood (1910)," *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*, vol. XI, pp. 59-138

86 Schapiro, "Leonardo and Freud: An Art-Historical Study," *Journal of the History of Ideas*, vol.17, no.2, April 1956, pp. 147-178

There is a popular general theory that if an artist has had traumatic experiences in childhood, his experience later on allows him to call upon it and thus produce images. But Freud teaches us nothing about Leonardo as artist. What are we trying to explain when we apply psychoanalytical theory? Why did he use certain shadows on the face and on the mountains in the background?

Kubie, in *Neurotic Distortion of the Creative Process*,<sup>87</sup> argues that if an artist repeats himself he is neurotic, inhibited, and compulsive. But we all have habits and can develop new habits—all human nature is like this. We must develop automatic actions in order to function at all, but they should be open to growth. The ego theory approach, in contrast, emphasizes conscious behavior, organized precision.

Is psychoanalysis an adequate ground for explaining artists' choices of forms, colors, etc.? No one does it adequately. Freud says that the triangle or pyramidal composition in Leonardo follows from his need to show the relationship between the two women. But elsewhere it signifies differently, for example, in the *Last Supper*. Other explanations of artists' choices include innate capacity, or pleasure-giving.

There seem to be two views: i) a man becomes an artist because he has to project, fulfill wishes; ii) then he goes on to produce beautiful forms which the viewer can read as beautiful if we share the same genetic predisposition.

## 12. 18 April 1973 Expression

Every style is said to have an expressive character. There is a wide range of meaning to the concept "expression," from the self expression of the artist to qualities described only in terms of another domain, for example, color as warm or cool, line as slack or energetic. Such terms are utterly embedded in our language, for example, Goethe: "All theory is gray, but green is the golden tree of life."<sup>88</sup> Musical tones are characterized as "high" and "low," implying above and below, loud and soft colors. That is, they are described by reference to a modality other than their own.

People agree on ranges like this, they agree on ordering qualities, although they perceive them differently (that is, a tall man does not see a 5' 11" man as tall, a 5' 6" man does). A painting might be seen as cold and blue, meaning either the tones of the whole work, or its character (timid, reserved). We cannot escape using these words, they are the "tertiary qualities" in aesthetics. Do they belong to the object or the spectator? Are they properly called subjective? We are part of nature, but we can also isolate our perceptions and try to approach them directly, for example, a doctor can be objective about pretended symptoms. An appeal to subjectivity, to vagueness

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<sup>87</sup> Lawrence Schlesinger Kubie, *Neurotic Distortion of the Creative Process*, New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1967

<sup>88</sup> Mephistopheles says "My worthy friend, gray are all theories, And green alone Life's golden tree." Johann Wolfgang Goethe, *Faust, Part 1*, transl. Bayard Taylor, Leipzig: F.A. Brockhaus, 1872, 72.

of reference, does not dismiss the problem. Statements about our feelings, and perception statements, are shared by many observers and can be related to the observed (“objective”) qualities of objects.

Expressivity is separate from expression. Balzac once said of a place that “this is an expressive little town,” meaning that it did not have a particular, special quality, but rather the quality of attracting our attention, of being appealing, in a loaded sense. Contrast this with musical indications for performances or scores such as “con espressione.” A desired energy of performance is meant here, every music student knows what it means. We often say of a thing that it is “inexpressive,” this is an effect of the whole. We say things like “a heavy book,” or “a light touch.”

“Intermodal colors” are tested by psychologists. We recognize peaks of distinctness of, for example, red. Logicians and others try to find profiles of distinctness.

“Expressivity” is a quality of attractive art, usually, although Piero della Francesca was admired by Berenson for his “inelegance.” We speak of “hot art.”

Expressionistic art compared to that which is not very expressive is art that has allowed the artist’s momentary feelings to become very pronounced in the work through the use of high value contrasts, strong directions of form, pathetic or elated subjects. After Expressionism, the “Neue Sachlichkeit” style seems very cold, for example, Dix’s portrait of a doctor uses a stark electric light, a do-not-touch cactus. In Max Weber’s last letter he wrote “Down with Expressionism.” This is cited in a biography of Max Weber by his widow. It was a typical 1920s feeling in Germany.<sup>89</sup>

Some expression in works does not touch us. Why? Some artists say work “x” is not “cold” it is merely “dead.” Some configuration of forms in the work must support this statement, which also needs reference to connotations, inferences, references. There is no alternative to this, even formalists use tertiary terms.

Expression is attributed to certain styles, for example, the recurrent features in Rembrandt are typical of him in all his subjects, in paintings which add up differently. Is style an expressive structure? Do we say the same things about all the works of an artist as we do of the expressiveness of individual works? Do terms like “Roman” mean a class of qualities of an abstraction? Are they derived from paradigms? Introductory generalizations about an artist—are these valid generalizations or projections from just some works? Often disagreements about the characterization of an artist are based on the two sides of this distinction, or based on choosing different works as typical of the artist. For example, Balzac may be seen as having had an extraordinary range or as a monomaniac.

Style is given in the execution of the painting, not its subjects. Raymond Queneau wrote *Exercises on Style*,<sup>90</sup> as a story about a man on a bus, in forty different styles.

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89 Marianne Weber, *Max Weber: A Biography*, New York: Wiley, 1975

90 Raymond Queneau, *Exercises on Style*, London: Gamberocchus, 1958

But we can object that some writers would take a more dramatic subject or treat a piece of past history. He might reply that in the Renaissance many different artists painted the same subject in their different styles. The meaning of expression changes when, in modern art, art could become biographical. Art became conditioned by the conventions of becoming an artist, the sense of repetition, etc. All these conditions govern expressivity choices. During the Renaissance, in contrast, there were notions of appropriate moods for certain subjects.

So expressivity is this not the state of a line, shape, color, etc. The work as a whole has expression, for which there is no term. We say "Giotto's quality," and speak of the "I do not know what," the indescribable but easily recognized quality. Since the Greeks, since Plutarch, this point has been made. Leibniz's analogy was to the roar of the ocean: thousands waves create this roar, but we do not hear every wave.<sup>91</sup> Beauty of content is vague but it is discriminable—our perception holds in suspension many fine distinctions—but we can do this only after much training. Why do some people have better "eyes" and "ears" than others do? Degree of aptitude and relationship to experience has to be left an open question.

In the church of San Vitale, in Ravenna, there is a mosaic showing the Sacrifice of Isaac, including angels. Panofsky, in his book *Perspective as a Symbolic Form*,<sup>92</sup> points out that the gold ground stands in contrast to the figures, the colors are related such that they come to the plane of the picture, that is, flat. The enclosure defines the field as a single picture plane; the rocks are therefore tilted to follow the line of the plane because otherwise virtual space would be implied. But why does the horse Sarah stands in go through the frame? Why are rocks elsewhere straight, for example, Moses giving his laws? Because Isaac is tilted, submissive, the rocks are tilted in the same angle as him—an expressive device? But the little tree has a tilted mass of foliage to follow the line of the frame. So what if the rocks are vertical? They would continue to Mount Sinai, the Moses scene in the next frame. Compare Cézanne's placing of chimney stacks on roofs: he changes their positions, weighs them. Thus the choice of tilted rocks satisfies a whole series of functions: it is expressive, it has its own identity, it fits with other murals in the series, that is, there are a number of non-identical functions in the one work. A word in a poem must convey sense, be grammatical, and fit the flow of sounds—it has to satisfy these many functions.

Let us consider some of the attempts to give some rational character to expression. There is the physiognomic approach, the effort to assign meanings to various shapes. Classical approach—Socrates, Plato, Aristotle especially emphasize the mimetic, the direct representations of expressive movements. In Xenophon's *Memorabilia*, Socrates says that expression is carried by the gestures of the human body.<sup>93</sup> Poetry and music are differently expressive. Aristotle comments on painting's mimetic limitations, saying that emotion is motion, movement in the

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91 Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz, *New Essays Concerning Human Understanding*, LaSalle, Ill.: Open Court Pub. Co., 1949

92 Erwin Panofsky, *Perspective As Symbolic Form*, New York: Zone Books, 1991

93 Xenophon, *Memorabilia, Oeconomicus, Symposium, Apology* (Loeb Classical Library, no, 168), 1923

time, therefore music can articulate its movement in such a way as to parallel that of real emotion. The same is true of Quintilian on eloquence. See Karel Svoboda's *Aesthetics of Aristotle*.<sup>94</sup>

There was a moral didacticism attached to this: only measured music should be played to young people. Aristotle in the *Politics* says that good citizens should have judgement, so music is one way of training the young, especially in a military state because it has a civilizing influence on people.<sup>95</sup> Now, music is separate, technically learned. The totality of viewpoint that the Greeks had is long gone.

But the distribution of accents in the placement of the metopes in Greek temples reflects the emotion of the subject of the friezes. In other words, the mimetic alone was not the only means of expression. Vase paintings especially were differently treated according to subject. Why did the theorists not take note of this? Because the isolated, freestanding monument was the paradigm of art, especially the figure in repose, narrative or action were regarded as secondary. The freestanding figure was also a hero, often a god. But the artists did respond to details of expressiveness, in their choice of proportions, contrasts, repetitions, colors, and the like.

During the Middle Ages and into the Renaissance there arises a musicality of the visual partly because of the influx of primitive arts, and new languages full of color words. In the seventeenth century musical and mimetic theory were at last fused. Thus Poussin's letter to Chantelou defending his employment of different means for different subjects—lyrical, martial, ecstatic are the Greek modes, so we used to do it this way; he takes Zarlino's sixteenth century text on music for his reference. Anthony Blunt's contention that Poussin was just showing off his learning is inadequate—we can see by looking at the paintings that these distinctions are relevant.<sup>96</sup> Poussin was saying: "In our style, this mode is used in such and such a way, in another it would be used differently."

The inherent character of music is also qualified by its frequent association with the text. The idea of "Pure Music" is associated with lack of expression because it does not have meaning. Yet no words does not mean lack of meaning. For example, Milton wrote of the "unexpressive sounds" of the heavenly choir at Christ's birth. Opera brought words and music, as well as theater, into a new set of relationships.

By the end of the eighteenth century, Poussin's idea was used to characterize these different modes. Treatises on caricature were written. Superville wrote on the *Unconditional Signs in Art*<sup>97</sup> (the British Museum has a copy). The human mind has a disposition to experience calm as horizontal, happiness as up and down as gloomy. Architecture fits this. Colors. Blue, yellow, red. Minerva, Venus, Juno. *Naturphilosophie* tried to synthesize all of natural phenomena into triads, dualities.

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94 Saint Augustine, *Aesthetics of Aristotle*. Ed. by Karel Svoboda, San Francisco: Western Classics, 1973

95 Aristotle, *Politics*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1997

96 Anthony Blunt, *Nicolas Poussin*, London: Phaidon, 1967

97 Humbert de Superville, *Essai sur les signes inconditionnels dans l'art*, Leyden: C.C. van der Hoek, 1827

Blanc utilized these ideas, and influenced Seurat, yet added a concept of difference, of emphasis, that is achieved when the horizontals are more pronounced. He talked of the effects of lines above and below the horizon. Charles Henry spoke of kinetic, potential, dissipating energy applied to the arts—this also influenced Seurat.

In the twentieth century Matisse and Kandinsky believed in the inherent powers of forms to be expressive. But there is no serious experimental study of these matters. We have to rely on intuitiveness, itself modified.

All expression is conventional, and depends on learned codes. Codes are congealed chunks of the relevant experience; they are never larger than the experience. They are habit, with the possibilities of leaps beyond the habitual. When we hear “ring” in relation to a bell, we relate the word to an imagined source. When we associate “ring” with a finger, nothing is heard, but the word is felt differently because of the changed context or meaning.

Are there no meanings without context? No. In order to determine context you must have unequivocal meaning somewhere (for example, “finger” in regard to “ring”). Somewhere in the context something is unequivocal. Text is where an unequivocal statement is rendered equivocal by its entire context.

How does expression relate to the idea advanced earlier that art is a group product, the result of collectivities? Dutch art is clearly different from Italian art. Are the criteria we apply to individual works the same as those for national style of differences? We can either characterize the works but not the makers, or characterize the makers, for example, the Greek character in Greek art.

Similarly, we spoke of the physiognomy of handwriting. Coded descriptions of handwriting, and in history. Psychohistory is important here: can changes of institutions, for example, be explained by psychoanalytic theory? This is a difficult problem, not clearly stated in the literature. We tend to see the art of a people as on the same level or order as that of individuals.

### **13. 25 April 1973 [Systematic Art History]**

[I was in Washington, so missed this lecture. The text below is my notes on the summary/review, given by Professor Schapiro at the beginning of his May 2 lecture.]

In the nineteenth century, art historians set out to construct large-scale explanatory systems of art throughout the world. This task is not yet approaching completeness. Wölfflin criticized his own work in 1933 when he published a retraction in a magazine, especially his tendency to use nationalistic types, which he now felt were too exposed to exploitation by nationalists and racialists. Issues of race and the differences between places [Italian and Germanic art]. This incompleteness of view forced him back to expressionist, psychological and extra-art considerations. If there

are cycles, how does a new cycle begin? That linear leads to painterly is an observable phenomenon but does painterly always then lead to linear? How much conscious recognition is there on the part of the artist of, say, the exhaustion of painterly means at a given time? What was the impact of moral criticism in the late eighteenth century? Twentieth century art challenges Wölfflin's axiomatic-like system (his search for independent postulates undeducible from others), for example, how could it explain Mondrian's geometric lines with "open" forms in the 1930s or Picasso's simultaneous styles? In Wölfflin's *Classic Art*, and *Renaissance and Baroque*,<sup>98</sup> his categories may apply there as special in the conditions. Perhaps they do fit their contexts, but they are not necessary or neutral, relevant to all art everywhere, even to all Western art. There are problems also with style in primitive art. His categories reflect the art of his own time, especially his German context.

So, art history faces the question of the scale of explanations. Are centuries-long explanations applicable to the careers of individual artists? Wölfflin dreamt of an "art history without names," that is, an epochal, macro approach. The principles that apply are difficult: every soldier has a stomach and needs to be fed, but an army does not have a stomach, it simply needs food.

To what extent may we take worldviews and philosophies as clues to understanding great styles of art? Dilthey raised this question. Dvorak's idea of *Kunstgeschichte* and *Geistesgeschichte*: because of him, Mannerism became familiar as an art style. Kokoschka was evoked when Dvorak was read. Historians took it up, for example, Karl Mannheim in his book *Ideology and Utopia*.<sup>99</sup> He studied art history in Vienna, and was a friend of the art historian Frederick Antal. "Art and World View" applied epistemology and sociology to world-view notions. This was a structuralist approach, based on inherent principles in formal relationships, on elementary concepts or pairs that could serve as the nucleus for expressive interpretation. For example, Gestalt psychology emphasizes parts/whole, parts as functions of wholes, parts as subdivided wholes.

Paralleling this, Sedlmayr in the 1930s and 1940s wrote on Borromini.<sup>100</sup> Yet, there was a weakness in his approach because of its disregard of history, of the concrete individuality of works, of the existence of alternate readings; it used too few elementary principles. Confidence was inspired by the success of linguists, such as Lévi-Strauss and Jakobsen (*Structural Anthropology*<sup>101</sup>). They showed that synchronic structure allows diachronic interpretation, when it is based on belief that language is an open system, yet with a stabilizing tendency. But Lévi-Strauss could not reassert these. Pure structuralism implies the belief that the fundamental properties

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98 Heinrich Wölfflin, *Classic Art: An Introduction to the Italian Renaissance* (1898) London: Phaidon Press, 1994, and *Renaissance and Baroque* (1899), Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1968

99 Karl Mannheim, *Ideology and Utopia. An Introduction to the Sociology of Knowledge*, London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1968

100 Hans Sedlmayr, *Die Architektur Borrominis*, Berlin: Frankfurter Verlags-Anstalt, 1930

101 Claude Lévi-Strauss and Claire Jacobson, *Structural Anthropology*, New York: Doubleday, 1967



of the known, whole universe could be predicted: that is silly because what is the universe, what are these properties? (See Bruno Snell's *The Discovery of the Mind*.<sup>102</sup>)

#### 14. 2 May 1973 Valuation

Why do we talk about certain objects/artists and not others? (We do so *within* a style.) This is a crucial choice. Does it always amount to the exercise of subjectivity and lead to inaccuracy? But in pathology, criminology or engineering one starts from a preference; we prefer the building to stand rather than fall. The issue becomes: Can you encourage others to engage in the same process in the same way?

Undefined propositions are typical starting points in philosophy, science, etc. So one cannot criticize art historians for advancing the same kinds of ideas. Pascal spoke of non-arbitrary axioms, unprovable but acceptable.

There are, however, choices by art historians that do not satisfy succeeding generations, for example, the space allotted to artists in Vasari's *Lives* compared to our relative valuations. There were special conditions such as Vasari's love of the anecdote. Art historians presuppose a selection based on the preferences of their peer groups, and do so mostly unconsciously. This is a dynamic process, changing often, so we need to allow for the points of change. Judgements as to whether a work is Titian's, his school, or an imitation are one kind. (Friedlander said: "An incorrect attribution reveals your ignorance of at least two artists.") Judgements of the quality of the whole work of an artist is another kind, it does not seek diagnostic features. (The German painter Max Liebermann said: "The experts exist in order to deattribute our worst works.")

Different weights are given to various periods of art. Some styles are not accepted as whole styles, some are seen as transitional, or as the decline of a "greater school."

Others say that all judgements of value are worthless in contrast to giving an account. In doing this you discover the importance of, say, Michelangelo. "Importance" thus becomes later influence (this relates to the distinction between a history of morals compared to a history of ethics). Parallel in the history of science: did science change because of the quality of Newton's mind, his range, or because of the internal history of science's development? Yet in art history we emphasize artists such as Grünewald, El Greco and Vermeer who were without influence in their time, and did not have a consistent later influence, but whose work exhibits, perhaps later "elective affinities" with, in the case of Grünewald and El Greco, the Expressionists. The Le Nain brothers were celebrated by Champfleury: unheralded in their time, yet a precedent for Courbet. In all, we can say that the concept of later influence is not adequate to displacing judgements of value. We would miss these

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<sup>102</sup> Bruno Snell, *The Discovery of the Mind. The Greek Origins of European Thought*, New York: Harper, 1960

artists—they may be relevant to us because of things in our own time not connected with art.

Science is regarded as value free in its operations, its stress on tests of confirmability, etc., but scientists do have aesthetic preferences for theories. Scientists are usually vague about these enthusiasms. Polanyi, in *Personal Knowledge*,<sup>103</sup> argues that theory choices are very influenced by personal and social commitments; in this sense, conservative scientists parallel negative artists. But these are contextual comments; scientific work does not have a recognizable physiognomy, whereas the value of artworks depends on this. Artworks cannot be translated into another language or form, while scientific operations can. Maxwell's law is the same in whatever language or demonstration, but a copy of Titian and an original Titian are fundamentally different.

Is style a theory in a generative sense, that is, does it generate its instances? Some qualities in art are translatable, others are not. Goethe wanted to test all great works of literature by having them translated. But to what extent does the valuing of art works and of scientific works rest on the same criteria? There is a temporal history of science such as that of Polanyi, which contrasts to a Marxist view of science.

Art history often arises from local pride. This is one of oldest sources of art writing. It is a value-prompted activity, full of fake statements.

Within science, some scientists practice an attitude like that of art criticism. Eminent scientists often investigate the way discoveries are named. *System de Monde* was published in 10 vols.<sup>104</sup> Ernst Mach's *History of Mechanics*<sup>105</sup> examined nineteenth century mechanics, paradoxes, distinctions between mass and light, and vagueness about time and space concepts. There is a history of theories of heat. Annaliese Maier's studies of Galileo's forerunners<sup>106</sup> show the prejudices that had to be overcome. There are current proposals for a journal of scientific criticism.

What is meant by the "value-free" character of something, of an artwork, or of science? There is a distinction to be drawn between the personal and social factors which lead a man to a problem, influence the way he deals with it, the battles between conservatism/innovators, the influence of the other members of the group, the impact of success, the values of the "sacrifice ethos," etc., and the actual scientific work.

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103 Michael Polanyi, *Personal Knowledge; Towards A Post-Critical Philosophy*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1958

104 Pierre Simon Laplace, *The System of the World*, Dublin: Printed at the University Press for Longmans, 1830

105 Ernst Mach, *The Science of Mechanics. A Critical and Historical Account of its Development*, La Salle, Ill., London: Open Court Pub. Co., 1942

106 See: Anneliese Maier, *On the Threshold of Exact Science: Selected Writings of Anneliese Maier on Late Medieval Natural Philosophy*, Steven D. Sargent, ed. and trans., Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1982

Art history is influenced by all these factors but art is still its subject, unchanged by this. Many art writers fail to recognize qualities in a work that any practitioner would see straight away. But writers about art and the artists often share the same assumptions, for example, Wilhelm Worringer<sup>107</sup> and the German Expressionists.

The taste of an artist often screens out works later regarded as valuable, for example, the taste for primitive art in the early twentieth century led to a distaste for Bernini. A single judgement by a whole community is rare: individuals attach themselves to one of the stratifications of taste of their time.

The same artwork may be admired for very different reasons; for example, the structuralists admire Borromini because of his formal inventiveness, yet Riegl saw Borromini as an expressionist. Historical study can take us beyond these singular preferences.

A “taste,” an insight, a judgement is incapable of passing severe tests. Differences of judgement occur randomly. Direct experience and intuition requires confirmation through the looking of *others* (it is not self-perpetuating). The fallibility of the most experienced “eyes,” like our perception of nature, changes.

Judgement, then, is a collective process. It is about hard looking and exposing many fallacies. Our perception is only our self’s responses; it has to be re-experienced by ourselves and shared with others. Culture carries itself forward in this way. Experience is both analytic and intuitive, it is always open to question and further enrichment. We can see artworks in different contexts as different, including seeing them as better.

Museums are the “hospitals of art,” places where paintings go in the hope of getting better with time. There is a community of interests in the “objective” approach that might seem to be widespread in the art world.

Can we achieve objectivity of value judgement? Scientists disagree with each other, for example, astrophysicists these days. Personal attitudes are not appropriate to scientific aims, they amount to subjectivity. But a man with a passion to discover, and who succeeds, is no longer subjective. He has risked making a mistake.

Taste changes, judgements vary. What are the grounds for asserting the correctness of a judgement? Not right/wrong but preference, attitudinal. Or as Croce, Venturi, and Birkhoff in *Aesthetic Measure*<sup>108</sup> argue: value = order over complexity. Geometrical forms are susceptible to measure, while connotative shapes have great effect but there is no way of measuring this. Birkhoff overlooked things like the effect of orientation - proportions cannot be stated numerically or quantitatively.

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107 Wilhelm Worringer, *Abstraction and Empathy. A Contribution to the Psychology of Style*, London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1953

108 George David Birkhoff, *Aesthetic Measure*, Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1933

Birkhoff's formula is a version of the old Greek preference for variety in unity/unity in variety.

Is there no objectivity? Is the measure of qualities too wide a net? Mathematical net, science's experimental net: no one has developed a theory for more complex forms.

But there is a kind of objectivity (a sense of satisfying requirements) that artists hold to when they work. Understanding Rembrandt is understanding that he accomplished something that was right for him. (And did so, partly, collectively.) He sees that other artists respond to these works rather than others, or to this or that aspect of his work, and adjusts.

If taste were idiosyncratic or vogueish, would a work survive the succeeding waves of changing taste? If they did not, there would be no tradition, unless we assume that certain attitudes are shared by all human beings. Judgements of contemporary art are notoriously difficult: malicious people, arguing against objectivity, point to howlers. To them we can reply: "Wigglesworth will be remembered when Milton is forgotten but not until then."

Is there an ongoing assimilative process of judgement, one that acquires new works as it goes along? On what grounds would we retain the same artists, acquire new ones, see same artists from different viewpoints, etc.?

All artists face the problem of creating a *valid* (true) work of art. All artists know what might fit and what will not. There are different orders of requirement: i) holding, attracting, refreshing the eye, that is, "form" values. But artists may be mistaken in their idea of coherence, or drawn to extraneous factors (for example, a cute face). That may cause the artist to lose his hold on the unity of the work. Or ii) the artist may choose forms which add up to the order, inflect it, add details to it, or he may want to express ideals (freedom) or attitudes (tragic, austerity). He may feel a moral ideal within these qualities, relative, say, to Baroqueness or to the State of his time.

Every artist wants to make the work as good as possible; formally, but content-wise as well. Artists affirm that they have goals that pertain to their attitudes as believers, etc. So their goal is not just coherent work, but a realizing of certain possibilities of forms.

Between 1880 and 1920 the idea of a universal aesthetic, of the needs of perceptual order and the inner expressiveness of shapes won over many artists but did not create a style of itself. Formalists made selections of certain forms, ideological features. Rectilinearity has to do with human social orders, for example, Mondrian. Symbolists were, in contrast, mystics. This can produce good and bad works: therefore, we should understand forms as contents to be operated on. A family of forms may equal a certain type of order. All values are to be realized. To have a program of objective aesthetics plus the artist's commitment is not sufficient to

constitute a work of art in itself. If it were possible, could the resultant work be judged objectively? Expressiveness is what counts ultimately - the forms are the body to this end.

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