BLIND SPOTS

CRITICAL THEORY AND THE HISTORY OF ART IN TWENTIETH-CENTURY GERMANY

Frederic J. Schwartz

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Art historians and critics have long found inspiration in the works of Walter Benjamin, Theodor W. Adorno, Ernst Bloch and Siegfried Kracauer. Indeed, these figures have been crucial to the recent theoretical developments and self-consciousness in the discipline. For their part, the early German critical theorists had a sophisticated sense of the state of the visual arts at the time—from the work of the avant-garde to developments in the academic history of art. This book is the first to focus on the extraordinary symbiosis between critical theory and other discourses of the visual in the first half of the twentieth century. In four extended case studies, the book traces the way in which central concepts of the aesthetics later termed "Frankfurt School" were deeply rooted in contemporary developments in painting, photography, architecture and film as well as psychology, advertising and the discipline of art history as it was practised by figures such as Heinrich Wölfflin, Erwin Panofsky, Wilhelm Pinder and Hans Sedlmayr. By studying the emergence and importance of the concepts of 'fashion', 'distraction', 'non-simultaneity' and 'mimesis' in the work of the critical theorists, the book traces the shifting intersection between the history of art and the Frankfurt School and seeks to uncover its specific logic. It argues that artists, art historians and critical theorists were united by a common project: that of exploring those aspects of modernity that could only be revealed by its visual products, of knowing the modern visually.

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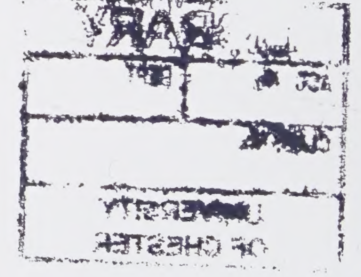

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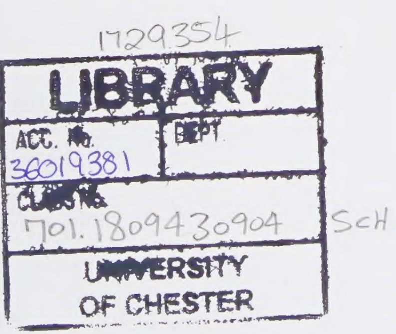

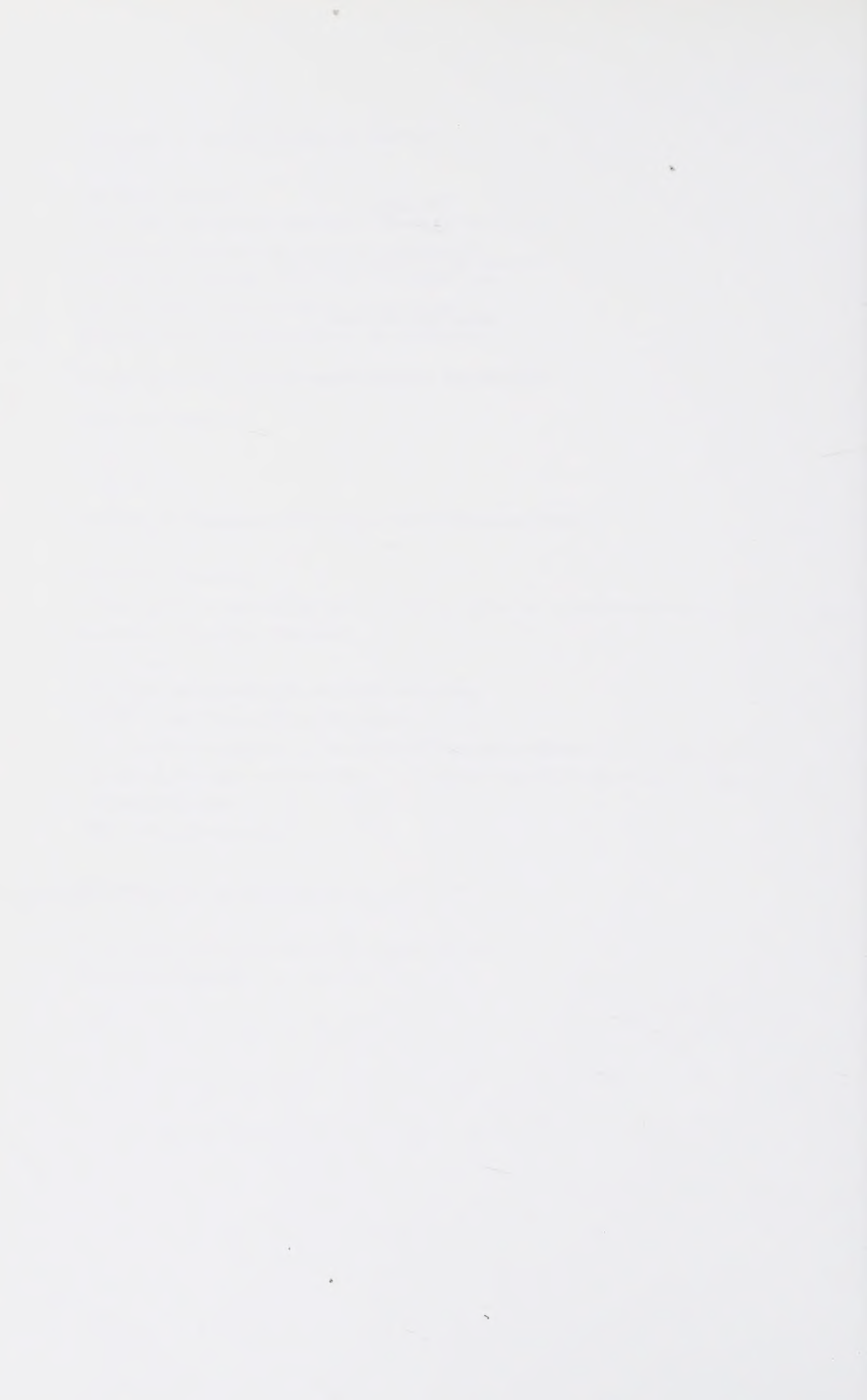

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FOREWORD

If Benjamin said that history had hitherto been written from the standpoint of the victor, and needed to be written from that of the vanquished, we might add that knowledge must indeed present the fatefully linear succession of victory and defeat, but should also address itself to those things which were not embraced by this dynamic, which fell by the wayside – what might be called the waste products and blind spots that have escaped the dialectic.

– Theodor W. Adorno,
Minima Moralia[1]

What did critical theory learn from the history of art? The question is hardly new. Walter Benjamin's interest in the work of the Vienna and Warburg Schools, for example, has been a source of fascination and a focus of research since the 'Benjamin Renaissance' began more than a quarter of a century ago. Yet the fact remains that Benjamin is the only important figure of Western Marxism in Germany whose relation to a specific art-historiographical context has been explored in any detail. (Significantly, the relation of his thought to his own *art-historical* context has been looked into less.) Furthermore, a consensus has developed that such intersections are selective and isolated, involved a complex translation into different philosophical idioms, and never developed into a proper dialogue.

This view needs to be revised, and the chapters that follow are intended as a contribution to that revision. This book has no pretensions to survey this vast field, to treat it systematically, or even to provide a broad introduction to it. Instead, it is a series of studies united by two theses.

The first is that the German critical theorists, in particular Walter Benjamin, Theodor W. Adorno, Ernst Bloch and Siegfried Kracauer, developed central concepts of their aesthetic and historical thought by means of a much closer engagement with various discourses of the visual than has hitherto been assumed, whether that was with the academic history of art, the avant-garde, or the various forms of psychology and related fields of the period. Many different bodies of knowledge were brought to bear on visual matters in the early

part of the last century, and some of them have since 'fallen by the wayside' and now look 'irrelevant, eccentric, scurrilous',[2] as Adorno continues in *Minima Moralia*. They form, however, the context in which the critical theorists developed theories that remain compelling today. Understanding these thinkers and engaging critically with their concepts from an art-historical perspective requires us to excavate the precise circumstances of their crafting. This is important for a theoretically informed and critical history of art, for as helpful as the work of Benjamin, Bloch, Kracauer and Adorno has been to historians and critics of the art of recent centuries, their perspectives have often been invoked uncritically and prematurely, as if theory were an unmediated form of truth and need, at most, be tried on 'ready-made' to see if the fit is good. Considering the close engagement of these thinkers with history of art, a paradoxical situation has developed: ideas emerging out of art, art-historical and art-theoretical discourses have been imported back into the field without an awareness that they were, in fact, deeply rooted there. In some cases, such as the critique of the notion of style or the autonomy of art, these ideas continue the work from which they emerged, perhaps gaining Emerson's 'alienated majesty' of the discipline's own rejected, or forgotten, thoughts. But at other times the authority of critical theory blinds us to the possibility that they might have been rejected for good reason. These concepts – I have chosen those that centre around 'style' and 'fashion', 'distraction' and the 'expert', 'non-simultaneity', and 'physiognomy' and 'mimesis' – need to be reinvested with the contingency of their own formation. Only when these ideas are set in motion again, when they are shown as the unstable elements of constellations that have long since ceased to shine, can the work of weighing them critically begin.

Another way of putting this is that the history of art has much to contribute to critical theory. For though the ideas of Benjamin *et al.* are powerful tools with their own philosophical fascination and rigour, they certainly cannot be simply and uncritically accepted at face value. Nor does further work in analysing the internal coherence and structure of these ideas within the oeuvre that the Frankfurt School represents suffice for us to gauge their usefulness. A view from the outside is called for here. To avoid one kind of 'blind spot' in the dialectic that represents a critical view of the history and historiography of art, we can use the parallax provided by playing the traditions of critical theory and the historiography of art off against each other. Certain paradigms and problems of the critical theorists look quite familiar to an art historian and thus can be illuminated from this standpoint; other matters, equally familiar to scholars of the Frankfurt School, need to be rediscovered in the history of art.

The second thesis behind this book concerns the way the critical theorists met the challenge of thinking about modernity through the evidence of the

visual. It is self-evident that all thinking runs up against resistance, whether conceptual or institutional, political or historical, that needs constantly to be recovered as concepts are tested or refined. Indeed, it is the resistances that the critical theorists faced that I have tried to identify in this book. But at their finest moments, these thinkers show an extraordinary awareness of, and self-consciousness about, precisely this challenge. What is striking is how often an image from physiological optics comes up – that of the blind spot that plagues human vision. And more striking is the paradox that even as the 'blind spots' tend to vitiate some aspects of their thought, the very awareness of this problem seemed liberating for the critical theorists in their attempt to know modernity. They were aware that they were inevitably thinking, to some extent, in the dark. They responded by allowing this darkness of an unknowable present to expand into a space of extraordinary speculative richness.

We are more modest today. Confronted with this impressive body of thought, however, the more modest generations engaged in the critical study of art and visual culture can do two things. On the one hand, we can try to recapture the philosophical resourcefulness that images in modernity and of modernity can inspire. These are not necessarily castles in the air: they are responses to problems of method and interpretation that continue to inform, or to trouble, the discipline. Many of the hermeneutical problems remain, and many of the earlier responses to them remain relevant. Others – issues of bodiliness, of corporeality especially – have lain dormant only to re-emerge with a new urgency, albeit in a different context. New paradigms of history, new configurations of the production and proliferation of images and a new phenomenological turn in the history of art and architecture all make clear that central ideas of the critical theorists and historians that were not 'embraced by the dynamic' of post-Second World War art history have a new relevance. Once considered 'waste products', these rejected thoughts look remarkably current and suggest that we need not always, today, start from scratch.

On the other hand, we need to recognise where not only art historians but also critical theorists move into a speculative realm. Uncovering the origins of certain ideas about the production, reception and interpretation of images and retracing the moves that earlier generations made can help us to pinpoint a few of these thresholds precisely and determine whether we really wish to cross them. And this can help us see where we do, in fact, want to start again fom scratch.

That the same problem of 'blind spots' affects this book is clear. It is written by an art historian as an art historian. And if this book emerged out of a fascination with the debates of the early Frankfurt School, it is also informed by a certain ambivalence with regard to the claims for truth made in the name of these thinkers. I have tried to turn this ambivalence into an advantage here,

into a way of avoiding the fall into orthodoxy, but readers will inevitably find other traps that I have not seen. Readers will also find gaps, as they might consider the concepts that I have identified as important nexes of thought to be less relevant than other, more traditional focuses of attention (such as 'aura' or 'allegory', 'empathy' or 'abstraction'). Obviously these ideas *were* embraced by the linear succession of ideas to which Adorno refers, but I have found many of the 'waste products', the detritus of intellectual history, to be more helpful in tracing the shifting intersections of critical theory and the history of art and in trying to get to grips with their specific logic and sense as it emerges today. I hope that these case studies will be read in that spirit, and as an attempt to bring four less familiar constellations into focus. Or rather, into one possible focus, if only to show that these constellations have always represented concepts in motion.

A Note on Editions and Translations

These chapters were drafted, in various forms, between 1994 and 2002, a period that saw not only an unprecedented quantity of scholarship on many of the figures discussed here, but also new editions and translations of their work. The six-volume German edition of Walter Benjamin's collected letters falls entirely within this period, for example, as does the larger portion of the impressive new English edition of Benjamin's *Selected Writings*; now, as this book goes to press, this has been completed, and we also have a fine new translation of Horkheimer and Adorno's *Dialectic of Enlightenment*. I have tried to incorporate newly available material when possible. Where I had originally made my own translations, however, I have left them as such, usually with a reference to any then available English version. Of course, unless otherwise stated all translations are mine.

Terborch

Und nun ist das in unserm Bild nicht etwa bloß der Zufal
Laune: das Schauspiel wiederholt sich, und so sehr ist es typ:

FASHION

CONCEPTS OF STYLE IN WÖLFFLIN AND ADORNO

To speak of culture has always been contrary to culture.

– Theodor W. Adorno and
Max Horkheimer,
Dialectic of Enlightenment[1]

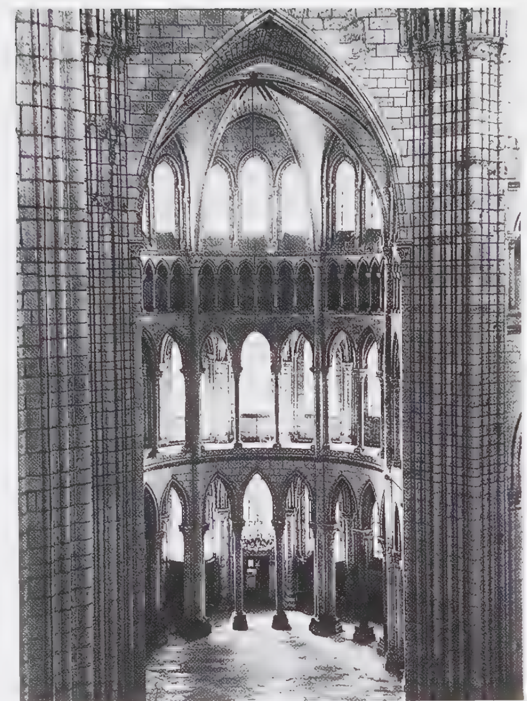
The history of art is no longer the history of styles. The notion of style, which once seemed to define the discipline, has loosened its grasp on our thoughts about art; many of the most powerful minds of the field have subjected it to critique; it is not adequate to our thinking about visual form and representation today. Style has obviously been a terminal case for some time, so much so, in fact, that the rethinking of the discipline over the last few decades has not submitted the category to the full force of its critical wrath.[2] Yet the death of this concept seems so strangely slow and bloodless, so nearly invisible, that one hesitates to write its obituary and lay it to rest: it has not been adequately historicised, its discursive contours have not been drawn with any precision and its eclipse has yet to be charted. It is to such a historicisation that I would like to contribute here by looking at the way in which the concept of style did double duty in Germany, serving not only as a category by which the past was understood, but also as one through which a particularly modern problem was represented and analysed. That problem was the convergence of the realms of commerce and culture, the profound mutations to which images and signs were subjected as they formed part of the circulation of commodities, the instability of signification as its primary, unifying site came to be the capitalist marketplace. The problem, in other words, was the rise of a mass culture that was clearly reconfiguring the realm of signification, from politics to commerce to art. My argument here is that the categories of art history have always been central to thinking about mass culture in Germany, from the rise of *Kulturkritik* to the Frankfurt School; and that this is because the crisis of culture accompanying the development of a modern consumer market was, in turn, inscribed within the analytic tools of the academic history of art.

FACING PAGE From Wölfflin, *Kunstgeschichtliche Grundbegriffe*, introduction.

Cathedrals and Shoes

Much has been written about the concept of style, more than can be summarised here. And though my aims are historical rather than philosophical, and concerned with issues beyond those internal to the writing of art history, I think we need to begin with a single text and subject it to what the critical theorists called 'immanent critique'. By looking closely at an account of style by one of the most sophisticated art historians in the early years of the discipline, we can see how, even on its own terms, the concept is problematic and unstable. It is only by putting pressure on these immanent or internal contradictions, and not from any secure position outside, that we can see how this instability ultimately has its origins in contradictions beyond the theoretical concerns of the academic study of art.

Let us start, then, with a formulation that captures like few others the art-historical notion of style: Heinrich Wölfflin's famous postulate that the essence of the gothic can be seen as easily in the shoes worn at the time as in the greatest cathedral. Wölfflin is best known today for his famous *Principles of Art History* (*Kunstgeschichtliche Grundbegriffe*, 1915), in which he introduced *a priori* formal categories that seemed to make the study of visual artefacts a science.



FACING PAGE Wölfflin refers to the shoes (late twelfth/early thirteenth century) in fig. 242c. From Hermann Weiss, *Kostümkunde.*

RIGHT Soissons Cathedral, south transept, begun 1176. Photograph courtesy University College London.

The comparison, however, appeared nearly three decades earlier, in the *Prolegomena to a Psychology of Architecture* of 1886; it was Wölfflin's doctoral dissertation, and he scrupulously notes his source for the shoes.[3] At the simplest level, style is the presence of a common formal denominator in the visual production of a period. But if we listen to Wölfflin on the gothic shoe, we note some quite specific idealist assumptions that inform his early concept of style. First, he writes that forms cannot be reduced to matters, say, of function, material or technique (to use some then-current categories derived from the work of Gottfried Semper), but express instead a will that often manifests itself in direct opposition to material contingencies. It is not a position usually associated with Wölfflin, but it is precisely this that constitutes for him the lesson of the Gothic shoe:

> The human foot moves forward; but is this evident in the blunt line with which it ends? No. The Gothic found it insufferable that its will found here no precise expression, so it let the shoe end in sharp points. . . .
>
> The breadth of the sole results from the weight of the body. But [for the Gothic] the body has no rights, it is material, and dumb material must not be yielded to, the will must penetrate every part.

> Therefore architecture dissolves the wall into vertical elements, and the human foot is given a shoe with three raised points, whereby the feeling of heavy treading is eliminated.[4]

Here Wölfflin invokes contemporary theories of empathy (*Einfühlung*), letting the body mediate between spirit and form. Yet already one can see that this notion of style is idealist, historicist and formalist: it says that visual form expresses the historical state of the human will, the mind.

But what turns form into style is a corollary that goes one step further. It is the axiom that the will expressed in the shoe is the very same one that is expressed in the cathedral, the assumption that beyond the unity of form during a period lay a unity of spirit. It is certainly significant that Wölfflin feels no obligation to argue this carefully: 'That styles are not created arbitrarily by individuals but out of the feeling of the *Volk*,' he writes, is simply 'too generally accepted to require further elaboration.'[5] The logic is circular: style, defined as a set of common visual denominators in the art of a historically defined '*Volk*', is taken to be simultaneously the expression of, and the evidence of, a fundamental interconnectedness of the spirit and products of an age. 'To *explain* a style,' writes Wölfflin in *Renaissance and Baroque* of 1888, 'can mean nothing other than to place it in its general historical context and to verify that it speaks in harmony with the other organs of its age.'[6]

Wölfflin, however, had a paradoxical reaction to what I would like to characterise as the spiritualised notion of style, a reaction that often blinds us to his ultimate indebtedness to it. He never challenged the assumptions behind it, but he worried about its epistemological bases; and in fact the project of his early works, through the *Principles*, can be seen as an attempt first to circumnavigate and then retreat from the problems of the concept of style. It is this doubting Wölfflin whom we know best, and it is his probing critique of the notion of style that represents the core of his attempt to make the history of art a science, to make *Kunstgeschichte* a '*Naturgeschichte der Kunst*'.[7] It is therefore worth noting the points of his critique.

Wölfflin's objection is that the common view that sees 'the formal style [as] an expression of the age . . . has never been systematically founded'.[8] This is the approach of what he calls 'cultural history'. The result, he continues, is

> a good deal that is ridiculous, summarising long periods of time under concepts of a very general kind which in turn are made to account for the conditions of public and private, intellectual and spiritual life. They present us with a pale image of the whole, and leave us at a loss to find the threads that are supposed to join these general facts to the style in question.[9]

The issue is not the status of style as the visual expression of a cultural totality, but instead the lack of a 'foundation' that would 'enable art history to trace

individual events to general principles or laws', transforming the 'instinctive presentiment [*instinktives Ahnen*]' with which the art historian evaluates historical styles into valid knowledge.[10]

The problems were twofold. First, cultural history did not recognise artistic form as the object of a discrete area of inquiry. For cultural history, art tended to serve as mere evidence of the nature of another, more encompassing spirit; the irreducible qualities of the visual were ignored:

> There is a conception of art-history which sees nothing more in art than a 'translation of Life' (Taine) into pictorial terms, and which attempts to interpret every style as an expression of the prevailing mood of the age. Who would wish to deny that this is a fruitful way of looking at the matter? Yet it takes us only so far – as far, one might say, as the point at which art begins.[11]

Furthermore, the arts could not express ideas, which take discursive form; they could at best express moods.[12] Cultural history's search for unified spirit would necessarily turn any non-discursive form of expression into what another scholar called 'bad philosophy'.[13] A history of art needed to delimit its object of inquiry and the nature of the knowledge it could produce in a larger history of spirit. Like Alois Riegl at the same time, Wölfflin sought to isolate form in order to establish the discipline of art history as scientific and autonomous.[14] In the decades between *Renaissance and Baroque* of 1888 and the *Principles* of 1915, Wölfflin developed the project for which he is best known, seeking to track the internal unity and cyclical change of purely visual schemata, the history of 'the mode of representation as such'.[15] Yet this retreat to pure form and the shift from synchrony to diachrony did not originally grow out of a rejection of the spiritualised sense of style, but instead out of an attempt to render the relation of form to spirit more precise. Style, he wrote, had a 'double root',[16] *first*, in the 'expression of the temper of an age and a nation' (and of the individual as well), and *then* in the 'rational psychological process' that lay behind changes in the visual schemata of representation.[17] Nowhere does Wölfflin dispute the role of spirit in the production of form. He challenges only its sufficiency as a principle of historical interpretation. There is, he says, a 'second', purely visual root of style. Paradoxically, the postulate of interconnectedness of spirit led to the call for formalism as a way of identifying the irreducibly visual as an object of knowledge; and as Wölfflin's path to the *Principles* shows, this postulate was a prerequisite for his history of vision.

The second problem was the mechanism by which form and spirit could be related: '[W]e still have to find the path that leads from the cell of the scholar to the mason's yard.'[18] For the Wölfflin of *Renaissance and Baroque* and the dissertation on the psychology of architecture, the path leads through the body, the problem solved by recourse to empathy theory. We *feel* forms by analogy to

our bodies, and forms are created as the unconscious expression of the corporeal feeling of an age: 'the psychic is *directly* transformed into bodily form'.[19] It is interesting to watch Wölfflin shift between body and spirit, taking the brute physicality of the former as an alibi for the intangibility of the latter. 'Style,' he writes, 'reflects the *attitude and movement of people* of a time.'[20] The word he uses here is *Haltung*, which can mean either 'attitude' or 'posture'. The common metaphorical meaning of the word makes Wölfflin's point for him where his argument is on shaky ground. The body serves Wölfflin both as a transparent sign of spirit and as the organ of reception of spiritual states; it was localisable, verifiable, a common denominator. It could be limited to the visual and physical facts of form and would not be asked to argue finer philosophical points with ham fists. As a mediator of knowledge the body was chaste, able to curb the epistemological promiscuity that saw the spirit of the age wherever it looked, the omnipresent apple of the cultural historian's lascivious eye.

At times, the cultural body stayed behind the scenes, something to be mobilised, if necessary, to justify statements that might surprise us, as when he writes 'In the history of gable proportions, . . . one might discover the entire evolution of world-views', and continues: 'I do not fear the accusation that this is just a game.'[21] But the cultural body also led Wölfflin to a particular interest, a discreet little fetish, even. 'How people like to carry themselves and move is expressed in the first place in costume, and it is not difficult to show that architecture and costume correspond.'[22] Because of the close relation to the body, clothes reveal *Haltung* – both spirit and corporeality. And though Wölfflin seems at times to anticipate Riegl in his emphasis on the minor arts as the site where 'the birthplace of a new style must be sought',[23] his famous shoes are not to be taken as just one example of those decorative arts. It is their closeness to the foot, an organ of movement, that makes them as valid as a cathedral as the object that would yield historical knowledge of visual form and the historical state of mind.

Wölfflin's use of empathy theory should not be seen as a quaint beginning in outmoded physiological aesthetics, a sin of youth. Certainly his project does not require such a theory: though his work was deeply informed by the developments in psychological aesthetics occuring during the time at which he began his career, his art-historical problematic was in no way predicated upon them. These developments would have their issue in the human sciences decades later, as psychology would come to pose philosophical questions and not simply provide methodological short-cuts. (We shall see this in chapter four, in which it will become clear that the concept of empathy could not even begin to encompass or contain the mind–body problem it proposed to solve.) The theory of empathy is important here as it points to the problem around which Wölfflin's work circled; as an element in his historiography, the theory itself

could be, and soon was, removed. The results of his enquiries might have changed, as did his approach, but this fundamental problematic did not.[24] Through empathy theory, the young Wölfflin sought to solve some very serious problems of the idealist tendency of art history, the same problems he later tried to solve by the isolation of an autonomous history of seeing. Wölfflin wanted to rescue the concept of style from the problems inherent in it, problems of mediation, intention and agency. And in the founding generation of the history of art, it was in fact Wölfflin who most stubbornly fought style's simplistic equation of form and spirit, its tendency to present an embarrassing abundance of undifferentiated knowledge and its circular form of reasoning that worked by tautology and allowed everything to be said and precious little to be proven, reasoning that resisted critical thought and invited cliché. Yet the debased sense of style from cultural history, as the visual expression of the spirit of the age, always remained, as one root of form or as the proportion of a gable from which one could survey world-views. Wölfflin saw the problems of the art-historical concept of style with a clarity matched by few others, but he could never quite escape it. And we might ask why.

Novelty

The model of style as it was used around 1900 raises historical issues of many kinds: the extent to which the equation of style and spirit represents the legacy of Hegel, for example; or the nature of the interests vested in the institutionalisation of the history of art in the state universities of the late nineteenth century.[25] This model was also the basis of a scholarly practice that was complex and many-sided. Once formal unity was guaranteed by spirit, attention could productively be shifted to the issues of the diachronic development of style (as both Wölfflin and Riegl show) as well as to other aspects of contextual study. But as central as the assumption of the unified forms of a culture and of that unity as representing the spirit of its time was to the discipline, it was at least a century older than modern art history and was shot through with concerns broader and more urgent than the intellectual brief described here. This sense of culture can be traced in Germany to a tradition of historiography whose understanding of the present resulted in a compelling but wilful reading of the past, and whose view of history need only be read against the grain for its powerful critique of the modern to emerge in sharp relief. German theorists of history from Friedrich Schleiermacher to Wilhelm Dilthey rejected the enlightenment assumption of the natural sciences as the model of human knowledge and sought to comprehend human history instead from within. The

object of their study came to be the relative values and unquestioned communal forms that bound society, the *Geist* that was seen to integrate a culture, the spirit around which life assumed meaning and form. Yet we know that the hidden theme of this historiographical tradition that came to be known as the *Geisteswissenschaften* was actually the disintegration of stable pre-capitalist social forms. In the violent wake of the many forms of modernity, precisely that which seemed to be disappearing from social life was posited as the very condition of historical existence.[26]

The construction of an idealised past as a negative reflection of a fallen present produced many influential concepts. Germans of both the left and the right spoke of an organic *Kultur* instead of an alienated *Zivilisation*, a communal *Gemeinschaft* as opposed to a capitalist *Gesellschaft*. And through the unproved and unprovable premise of spiritual and cultural unity, the very crisis of capitalist modernity was also inscribed, however uncomfortably, in the art historians' notion of style.

I do not intend to trace the uncomfortable modernity of German *Kunstgeschichte* back to the hermeneutic tradition. What I would like to do instead is look at other ways in which the concept of style functioned around the turn of the twentieth century, when the discipline was constituting itself and testing its categories. Art historians had no monopoly on the concept; it figured centrally in the discussions of artists, critics and sociologists at the time, people who often published in the same journals as the art historians, who were occasionally on the same lecture circuit and who make even more explicit the romantic anti-capitalism that is undeniably a subtext of the professional art-historical discourse. For example, in a lecture of 1913 before the first *Kongress für Ästhetik und allgemeine Kunstwissenschaft*, Peter Behrens, a prominent *Jugendstil* artist turned architect and industrial designer, spoke of 'the goal which has found, throughout history, perceptible expression in style'. This 'sense of visual unity,' he said, 'is at the same time the precondition for, and the evidence of, a style. For by style we mean nothing but the unified formal expression, the manifestation of the entire spiritual life of an epoch'.[27] If I have stressed the spiritualisation of form in Wölfflin's early work, it is because I think it important that his sense of style was not that far from Behrens's – not far, that is, from the widespread clichés of the period.

There were other, more subtle, ways of talking about style at the time. Consider a passage from sociologist Georg Simmel's *Philosophy of Money* of 1900:

> [E]very style is like a language unto itself, with specific sounds, inflexions and syntax for expressing life, and as long as we know only a single style that forms our environment we are not aware of style as an autonomous factor. No one speaking his mother tongue naïvely senses the objective law-like reg-

> ularities that he has to consult . . . in order to express his feelings. . . . Rather, what one wants to express and what one expresses are one and the same, and we experience not only our mother tongue but language as such as an independent entity only if we come to know foreign languages. In the same way, people who know only one uniform style which permeates their whole life will perceive this style as being identical with its *contents*.[28]

Simmel's account of style as language is intricate and complex, but what is quite clear is the idea that a single style was once an integral part of a life free from alienation, and that such a happy, unproblematic relation to a set of visual conventions was no longer available. From Nietzsche on, contemporaries felt that the fragmentation of the age was reflected in the lack of unified formal principles in art, architecture and the entire physiognomy of everyday life. Instead of the consistency of a true style they witnessed what they considered the mechanical imitation of earlier, dead styles, a situation that the architect Hermann Muthesius described, like Simmel, with the metaphor of language, writing of the fall from the 'artistic paradise of style' to a state he likens to the 'Tower of Babel'.[29] Around the same time, in 1902, Wölfflin too felt this commonplace deeply enough to confide it to his diary, writing that the modern age lacked a style.[30]

Thus the art historians' notion of style, both in its canny version as mere visual uniformity, and in its uncanny version as spiritual unity, represents to a certain extent a longing for an idealised past. But I think we can give style's critique of modernity much sharper contours. For in the general criticism of the period, style was at the centre of a discussion which, I would like to argue, has left traces in art historiography, and which also concerned the relation of style to clothes, and of cathedrals to shoes. At the time, style was understood quite explicitly as the nature of visual form under pre-capitalist conditions of culture. This becomes clear through the study of a word that often appeared next to 'style', a word that hounded it, followed it and ultimately gave it its meaning. The word denoted a phenomenon that had, for contemporaries, everything to do with the gritty realities of social production so neatly transcended by style. The term referred to the way critics theorised the production and diffusion of form throughout culture in a capitalist economy. The word was *fashion*.

The concept of fashion was an obsession of the time. In the nineteenth century and before, the foibles of fashion were discussed in Germany under the rubric of human folly. By the turn of the century, however, the topic had assumed a greater gravity and a wider scope. Fashion was no longer discussed simply as a matter of clothing style, but came to be a blanket term used to describe the appearance of saleable objects of many kinds; the phenomenon of

Fashion plate from *Internationale Damenmode*, 1913.

changing clothing styles was taken as the model for describing the behaviour of consumer commodities in general. Extraordinary, occasionally furious debates emerged over the origin of fashions, their social meaning and psychological mechanisms. To sociologists, fashion allowed the study of the novel habits of consumers in a world now overflowing with commodities. To economists, it demanded the investigation of the economic significance of the consumer sector of the economy, a new issue in a discipline that had traditionally concentrated on heavy industry, agriculture and international trade. And to artists and critics, fashion came to be the central concept of a theory of the decadent nature of visual form under conditions of laissez-faire capitalism. In other words, in the discussions of fashion there was a nascent, if often crude, theory of mass culture.[31]

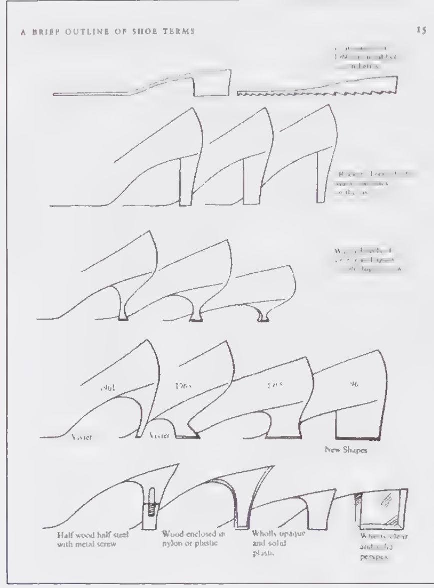
Like *Kultur/Zivilisation* and *Gemeinschaft/Gesellschaft*, *Stil* and *Mode* form a discursive pair in which each element implied the other and defined it by opposition. The pair in fact represents these more widespread dichotomies transposed upon the critical vocabulary of art. Innumerable articles were written with titles such as '*Stil und Mode*' or '*Stil oder Mode*', and most boiled down to a question such as this: 'Is that which we see as a conspicuous spectacle really a style, or . . . perhaps only a fashion? . . . Style or fashion, that is the question.'[32] And within this vast literature, not a single voice attempted to refute

Fashion plate from *Internationale Damenmode*, 1914.

the economist and sociologist Werner Sombart's famous characterisation of fashion as 'the favorite child of capitalism, emerging out of the innermost essence of capitalism and revealing its nature like few other phenomena of our age'.[33]

In his *Der moderne Kapitalismus* of 1902, from which I have just quoted, Sombart isolates three characteristics of the phenomenon of fashion. First, 'the vast profusion of everyday articles to which it applies'; second, 'the absolute *generality of fashion*, which first developed in our age'. These create a tendency towards the 'unification of demand' whereby ever larger markets are created for the very same objects, a vast demand which could be supplied with maximum efficiency and profit. The third characteristic, however, was seen as the most striking: 'The frantic speed of changes in fashion.'[34]

It was the theme of speed and change that most fascinated and alarmed contemporaries. 'Fashion is the transient, style the lasting',[35] was the oft-repeated phrase. The tendency towards change was seen, reasonably enough, as the artificial creation and maintenance of a market for new goods by industry and commerce, the result of the vast manufacturing capacity that had developed in Germany since the middle of the nineteenth century, as a solution to the problem of overproduction. The economists said this straight out: 'Change of fashion appears as the precondition for an increase of production'; 'trade and



LEFT From Eunice Wilson, *A History of Shoe Fashions* (London, 1969).

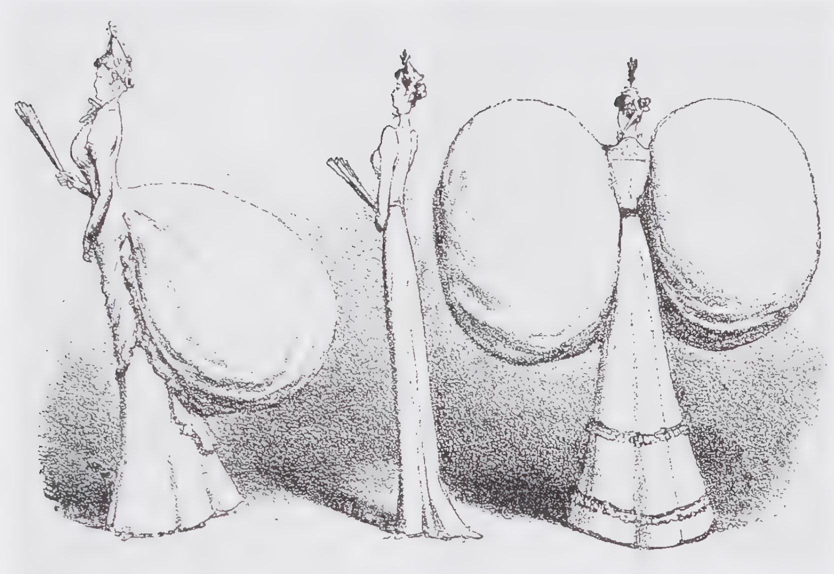
FACING PAGE Fashion caricature by G. Dalsani, 1893, illustrated in Eduard Fuchs, *Die Frau in der Karikatur: Sozialgeschichte der Frau* (Munich, 1906).

industry count . . . on this change to such an extent that they have learned to accelerate it and to capitalise on it in advance'; 'the whole business world extols fashion as a stimulant to turnover'.[36]

It is in terms of this economic rationale that nineteenth-century historicism in the arts was analysed. Most accounts of modernism in art and the applied arts explain historicism as a matter of academic conservatism and bourgeois philistinism. To contemporaries, however, it was simply a matter of capital:

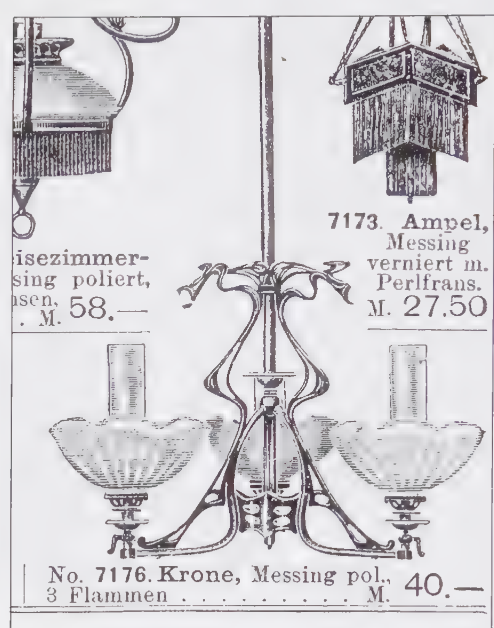
> The 'historical tendency' is a true child of our Steam Age. Artistic capacity cannot keep pace with the breakneck speed of modern mass production. . . . [But] any danger that fashion's perpetual need for change will ever create difficulties for the art industry was out of the question: the museums are inexhaustible, and the copying of older models can proceed at the rate required by industry and the market.[37]

The instability of taste that so disturbed contemporaries was very real. At the end of the nineteenth century, the historical styles followed one another very quickly indeed, certainly in comparison with what seemed to be the centuries-long development of styles in the historical past. Within twenty-five years, taste in Germany had gone through the phases of late classical, romanesque, gothic, renaissance, baroque and rococo, not to mention neo-classical, empire and various Orientalisms. With each change, consumers of some classes would have



felt pressure to replace certain possessions; and entire new industries – particularly branches of the press – thrived on feeding the consumer's desire to have what was, at the moment, new, the latest, or simply 'modern'.

The 'new' or the 'modern', in other words, was understood as an artificial construction of capital; it was trade and industry's way of deploying visual form to change consumption habits, redefining needs to serve the new organisation of production. The 'new' was created not by improvement but by slight changes, by difference. It was easier to attract the attention of the consumer by making something *different* than by making it *better* or *cheaper*.[38] Manufacturers and tradesmen saw their profits contained in the space of slight variations of form, saw the sale triggered by the crossing of a certain threshold of distinction and cultivated the nearly quantifiable minimum that signified the 'modern'. A comparison of two successive summer collections reveals that diacritically defined minimum clearly. In 1913, the male-look with the cravat was *de rigueur* for women, something that had disappeared by 1914, when the waist was also raised and de-accentuated. And the low, broad-rimmed hats of the earlier collection were made to hug the head more closely and terminate in exaggerated peaks.[39] Critics of the sort of consumer vision that looked for the difference between the waistlines and the angle of the hats saw the winds of change that filled the sails of capital not as evolutionary or even intelligible, but as arbitrary. Not until the 1960s did a historian seek to specify the minimal



increments of annual changes in shoe styles and an anthropologically informed literary theorist study fashion as a signifying system, but the arbitrariness of the signifying difference was a standard joke of the time.[40]

For many, though, it was no joke. Sombart, for one, dispensed with academic niceties and minced no words on the subject of historicism, that evidence of the lack of style that so bothered Wölfflin. With 'capitalism's conquest' of the market for everyday objects,[41] he wrote, the task of the artist was merely 'to play along with the historical fashion and to translate the styles of the past into Capitalese'.[42]

'Capitalese' is Sombart's term: if style was the mother tongue, then fashion was the language of capital. And if style could suggest, with respect to visual form, everything that was thought to be missing in an alienated, industrialised world, fashion implied the visual expression of the entire complex of crises of capitalist modernity. For fashion was implicated not only in the circulation of consumer commodities in a system that tended toward overproduction. The signs of the eternal 'new' functioned in yet another way in the hands of the consumer. Here is Simmel, again, in a text on fashion first published in 1905:

> Social forms, apparel, aesthetic judgement, the whole style of human expression, are constantly transformed by fashion, in such a way, however, that the latest fashion affects only the upper classes. Just as soon as the lower classes

FACING PAGE, LEFT Henry van de Velde, candelabrum, 1898/99.

FACING PAGE, RIGHT: Chandelier in the A. Wertheim mail-order catalogue (Warenhaus A. Wertheim, *Hauptpreisbuch 1903/04*).

RIGHT Henry van de Velde, hanging lamp, *c.*1906.

> begin to copy their style, thereby crossing the line of demarcation the upper classes have drawn and destroying the uniformity of their coherence, the upper classes turn away from this style and adopt a new one, which in its turn differentiates them from the masses; and thus the game goes merrily on.[43]

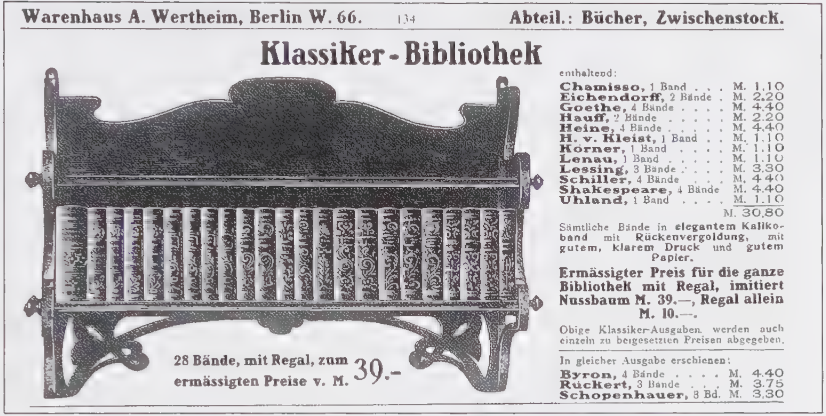
The game of carriage-trade distinction and mass-market appropriation that Simmel and others described is easy enough to follow in the applied arts. Look, for example, at the whiplash line of the *Jugendstil* in a candelabrum of 1899 by Henry van de Velde, its gentle, rhythmic asymmetry shooting up from solid roots, emerging in six branches for the candles and then reuniting in a crown or bud at the top. By 1903, the whiplash line was available through mail-order houses, flailing now a bit wildly and coupled with distinctly non-*Jugendstil* elements. It looked, one could say, at somewhat loose ends. But by then, prestigious artists (and the market niche that supported them) had moved on to a more controllable geometry. Similarly, a *Jugendstil* desk by van de Velde was modern and exclusive enough to have custom made in 1898; five years later, the swinging sign of the modern was being sold slung beneath a starter kit of literary classics.

While Simmel maintained a fine and fascinated neutrality when discussing this matter, others broke into tirades against both the parvenu and the copying

Henry van de Velde, desk and chair, 1898, photograph courtesy Germanisches Nationalmuseum, Nürnberg.

masses. This attention paid to the consumer's share revealed that fashion, in its guise as historicism or the 'new', was culturally destabilising in its creation of signs of distinction and identity. At the upper end of the market, fashion was the distasteful assertion of the class power of the upper bourgeoisie. As fashions trickled down, the same signs were deployed, perhaps more disturbingly, as claims to cultural entitlement. In an art journal, one economist wrote of 'the social guerrilla warfare which is incessantly waged in the field of fashion, which swings forever between social differentiation and imitation [and which] is the true economic hallmark of fashion and thus the secure base of capitalist exploitation.'[44] Fashion unmasked the mass market as an arena of social conflict, raising, in other words, the spectre of class.

Fashion raised other spectres as well. The energies of production and the claims to class identity are also erotic energies, or so wrote the same economist: 'Alongside the *drive to imitate* and the *desire for social differentiation* through fashion, the most important moment of all is the *erotic need for variation*.'[45] As capital mixed with and remapped culture, wrote critics, it also released erotic energies in order to appropriate them. One critic equated the perennial modifications that generate the 'new' with the way changes in clothing styles regularly shift emphasis from one of the female 'secondary sexual characteristics' to another: from hips to breasts to waist to buttocks. 'Industrialism', he con-



Shelf sold with classics library in the A. Wertheim mail-order catalogue (Warenhaus A. Wertheim, *Hauptpreisbuch 1903/04*).

cluded, 'accommodates all instincts, sexual desire as well as the urge for variation, to make its products desirable.'[46] The critics of fashion discerned a primitive beat behind the cyclical changes in the visible form of consumer commodities, and it alarmed them. The id was even seen to cross national borders: fashion was not only classed and gendered but had a political geography as well. Though the phenomenon of fashion extended beyond apparel, women's clothes were always the reference point, and few commentators failed to point out that European fashions were developed in Paris, where they were launched within the *demi-monde*, the world of café singers, actresses and prostitutes.

The many valences of fashion seem to encompass the collective anathema of modernity facing the German-speaking *Bildungsbürgertum*. Fashion represented the destructive effects of industrialisation, the deformations of rampant commercialisation, class conflict, an attack on the patriarchal order, the enemy west of the Rhine. Voices were often shrill. Critical thought and sober reflection surrendered before the monster of fashion as much as before the utopia of style. But fashion is of interest for more than its function as a figure for the sum total of threats to the male ego of the Wilhelmine bourgeoisie.[47] Despite its often hysterical note the discussion led to a powerful interpretation of the nature of form under modernity.

Fashion was understood as a state of semiotic chaos which developed in the nineteenth century as a direct result of industrial production and speculative commerce. It was form out of control, the dystopia of capitalism's distortion

of the culture it inherited and transformed. The forms of the past were disengaged from their original production context, from a spiritual economy in which they represented an authentic cultural currency, and then coupled to and circulated as commodities whose visual qualities were important only as exchange value. The degraded status of the visual forms of everyday life represented, to cite Simmel, 'the revenge of the objects for the fact that they are no longer the centre of our interests [but are] replaced by an indifferent medium' – that of money. In fashion, form was seen as taking revenge for its instrumentalisation as a commodity.[48]

Crude as it often was, fashion was the first concept through which the problem and the full extent of mass culture were represented in Germany – its exploitative nature, its social configurations, its signifying patterns. And when we note, in these forgotten discussions, the constant opposition between this concept and that of style, we realise how closely the two notions are tied, structuring a discourse of culture by polar opposites that define each other, the necessary complements of Paradise and Fall. We understand how, in the broad critical discourse of the time, the notion of style emerged from a climate of fear, and how the obsessive debates about fashion form the context in which art historians sought to stake out the borders of a discipline that would map the history of style.

If the phenomenon of fashion could not escape the purview of knowledge in the present, it was repressed in the study of the past, in notions such as style. Predictably enough, however, it came to the surface from time to time, even in Wölfflin's work, in passing comments and splenetic asides which served to situate and isolate his object of study in a pre-lapsarian past. The body, he writes in *Renaissance and Baroque*, was once but is no longer an organ of spiritual expression: 'It is self-evident that a style can only be born when there is a strong receptivity for a certain kind of corporeal presence. This is a quality which is totally absent in our own age.'[49] It is as if the connection between spirit and flesh had been severed or interrupted. Clothes too, according to *Classic Art*, have forfeited their proximity to corporeal spirit:

> the real kernel of a style is in the new outlook upon the human body and in new ideas about deportment and movement. This conception of style is a much more weighty one than that which obtains nowadays, when styles change like fancy dresses being tried on for a masquerade. However, this uprooting of style dates only from our own century and we have really no longer any right to talk of styles, but only of fashions.[50]

In asserting the historical relation of costume to style in the 'weighty' sense, Wölfflin was going against the grain, perhaps even being polemical. Certainly

he was treating clothes in an unusually redemptive way. Present culture, however, was a fallen realm, one he described using the topoi of *Kulturkritik*.

Fashion haunted Wölfflin and his project in deeper ways, ways that can be followed through his early oeuvre. In his dissertation, the spirituality of style was 'too generally accepted to require further elaboration'; the challenge was only to bring the flood of undifferentiated knowledge generated by this view under epistemological control. Two years later, in *Renaissance and Baroque*, the problem becomes more complex. In contrasting two styles, Wölfflin must account for change, and he devotes a chapter to the matter. Here he is in choppy waters, relating development to changes in corporeal feeling; but more revealing are the two theories he rejects. Garden-variety views of style as an expression of the age were of no help; it is here that Wölfflin scorns the 'ridiculous' results of old-fashioned *Kulturgeschichte*. He then proceeds to take on the problem of fashion. He does so in an unusually detailed and pointed two-page critique of a theory elaborated by Adolf Göller the year before the publication of *Renaissance and Baroque*, one that saw historical change triggered by 'blunted sensibility', by 'jaded senses [that] demanded a more powerful impact'.[51] What Wölfflin is rejecting in this so-called theory of exhaustion is an analysis that interprets culture as comprised of subjects who respond to novelty and stimulation, precisely in the way that the cultural subject of modernity, the consumer in the mass market, was described by Wölfflin's own contemporaries. The theory of 'jading' emerged at the high-point of architectural historicism and eclecticism, precisely as the debates on fashion began to rage, and Göller clearly situated his work in the context of the breakneck speed of stylistic change of the time:

> Scarcely had we celebrated the adoption of Greek forms . . . when a supremely gifted master [Gottfried Semper] . . . led us on to the less constrictive style of the High Renaissance. . . . But now, even the High Renaissance no longer pleases many people. They reach deeper and deeper down into the more strongly animated formal system of the Baroque, which only two decades ago was disdained as inorganic and mannered; or they pursue the equally strong and still unfamiliar charm of the German Renaissance. And there is no sign that this progression is about to come to a standstill or reverse itself. . . . In vain do we reproach ourselves for following a course that one moment leads us back to the only recently discarded Rococo and the next moment to the question: 'What now?' We know what is happening, but we cannot stop it. It is only too evident that we are following a law, the same law that once pushed the High Renaissance itself into the Baroque, the early Gothic into the late Gothic – the same law that has carried every other style from ascent to flowering and from flowering to decay.[52]

Göller treats styles as fashions. For Wölfflin his failure was the lack of any distinction between change in the historical past and change in the decadent present. Blunted sensibility or jading could not, 'as Adolf Göller would have us believe . . . lead to a new style.'[53] The rare, explicit mention of Göller suggests that these comments are a direct response to the Stuttgart professor. Wölfflin argues precisely that the changes of the nineteenth century were not governed by the same law as those that marked the change of the great styles such as the move from classic to baroque, the focus of his study; the recent fads, he writes, were not even styles at all.

By 1915, when the *Principles* were published, the sense of style as an expression of the fundamental interconnectedness of all manifestations of a culture was not one to which Wölfflin could subscribe at any level, and the stakes were not only the arid ones of methodology. For the concept of style had been confiscated for propaganda purposes in the Great War; the 'spirit of the time' on which style centred was one that separated French and English from German, one that saw its fulfilment in a war Wölfflin rejected.[54] This was a particularly modern war in which not only armies and industries, but nearly all available representations were mobilised. In the face of this political abuse of images and historical concepts, Wölfflin retreated to the purely optical treatment of art as a way of avoiding any traffic with prevailing atavistic and essentialist views of national cultures.

Style, in other words, made its final exit from Wölfflin's work when the body could no longer be epistemologically chaste due to the violation and abuse it received in the mobilisation of fear and hatred by both sides in the war effort.[55] But long before ideological concerns put it off-limits, methodological concerns had led him in other directions in search of different models for the historical explanation of forms, a path broken already in his dissertation, and one whose goal could already be discerned in 1899 with the suggestion of a 'double root' of form in *Classic Art*, opening up the possibility of a history of artistic vision not subject to the vagaries of cultural cliché. Yet counter-balancing this tendency and ultimately undermining it was an ideological investment in the synthetic scholarly grasp of a historically remote visuality that predated the capitalist commodification of form. In his introduction to early editions of the *Principles*, Wölfflin is surprisingly frank:

> Nothing marks so clearly the opposition between the art of the past and the art of today as the unity of visual forms then and the multiplicity of visual forms now. In a manner unprecedented in the history of art, the most contradictory [tendencies] seem to be compatible with each other. . . . But the loss of vitality compared to the one-sided strength of earlier epochs is immeasurable. It is a beautiful task of the scholarly history of art to preserve

French propaganda sheet. Joanny Durand, 'Gott mit uns', colour woodcut, 1917. The sheet juxtaposes the German slogan 'God with us' with scenes of reported German atrocities in occupied territory. Photo courtesy Musée d'Histoire Contemporaine-BDIC, Paris.

> at least the idea of such a unified visuality, to overcome the confusing jumble and to bring the eye into a firm and clear relation to the visual.[56]

And contemporary critiques of form under modernity also show us why Wölfflin, to the frustration of generations of readers, removes visual form from a broader sense of culture and withholds it from dialogue with other manifestations of a society (as he does with his own theory by suppressing the original introduction in later editions). For by positing the law of the eternal return of classic and baroque modes, he rejected the law invoked in contemporary discussions both of shoes and of great buildings, the law of supply and demand.

From Wölfflin, *Kunstgeschichtliche Grundbegriffe*, section on 'Linear and Painterly'.

Only in light of the contemporary obsession with the breakneck pace and uncertain goal of formal mutation can we understand the cold pathos with which Wölfflin submits form to a law that dictates the eternal recurrence of the move from linear to painterly, plane to recession, closed to open form, multiplicity to unity and clarity to unclearness – the famous 'principles of art history'.

The strange abstraction of Wölfflin's principles developed through the steady rejection of positions he found variously distasteful, detestable or unsound. And this series of strategic retreats ultimately left him with no ground on which to stand. His argument in the *Principles* finally implodes in a section of his conclusion entitled 'Das Warum', or the 'why' of it all. The section is a muddle, a strain and in the end a black hole. Wölfflin proposes many causes of formal changes, from a vaguely Hegelian suggestion that 'every form lives on, begetting, and every style calls to a new one' to a partial and grudging acceptance, in fact, of Göller's 'theory of palling of interest and a consequent necessity of a stimulation of interest'.[57] Yet he is fully satisfied with none of these explana-

From Wölfflin, *Kunstgeschichtliche Grundbegriffe*, section on 'Linear and Painterly'.

tions. Despite the title of the section, and his goal of explaining 'the problem of historical development', despite his principle of the change of classic modes of representation to baroque modes, Wölfflin can articulate no proper *theory* of stylistic change. This crucial section of the book, which should have been its climax, shows in the end that he cannot explain formal development; he can only postulate laws about it, which is something quite different. Ultimately he falls back on the extra-artistic causes he strove to ignore, the historical evidence that inevitably turned analysis into tautology. In two crucial sentences, he moves from a statement of internal development to an acceptance of external factors of the sort invoked by cultural history: 'It is true, we only see what we look for, but we only look for what we can see. Doubtless certain forms of beholding pre-exist as possibilities; whether and how they come to development depends on outward circumstances.'[58]

The double root of style was also a double bind. It functioned first as a way out of the clichés of cultural history. There was *another* root of style to be explored, one that would submit to the dictates of science. But that other root

LEFT AND FACING PAGE From Wölfflin, *Kunstgeschichtliche Grundbegriffe*, section on 'Plane and Recession'.

could not be addressed without violating Wölfflin's idealist principles, his sense of what culture should and must be. The double root then served as a way back from the materialism that he could not confront. Wölfflin was caught between style and fashion. Though rejecting both, the very rejection determined his solution; the concepts remained as footprints showing the spots from which he shifted his position and between which he tried to manoeuvre. The sophistication of his critique of the concept of style was matched by his repugnance with the development of forms as he witnessed them in his own culture. Ultimately repugnance won out, and when forced to choose, Wölfflin remained an idealist. He submitted form to law; he perfected the synthetic vision that unified the visual production of a period; he defended the 'weighty' sense of style from the 'masquerade' of the present.

But I think we can best see the way that fashion haunted style in the point at which Wölfflin's notion of style first appeared, in his discussion of the gothic shoes. Of course, by now we should be thoroughly suspicious about gothic style as Wölfflin wrote about it, as a visual unification of a whole culture, from shoe to cathedral. Now that style emerges as a construction as much implicated in turn-of-the-century capitalism as in the distant historical past, we might ask just how much spirit there is in Wölfflin's shoes. If we interrogate Wölfflin's early text, his scrupulously footnoted dissertation, we get an answer. The answer is that there was probably very little spirit there indeed. Returning to Wölfflin's source, the *Kostümkunde* by Hermann Weiss, we can confirm what the young art historian writes, that the shoes appeared in the twelfth century.

Yet what Wölfflin fails to tell his readers is that, according to the passage he read, they emerged at the *end* of the twelfth century, and disappeared almost as quickly.[59] Weiss's characterisation of the pointed shoe is in fact quite unambiguous. It was, he wrote, just a strange and passing 'fashion'.[60]

The example of Wölfflin shows one way in which art historians and their notion of style emerged from and are marked by the capitalist culture that surrounded them; how the crisis of capitalist modernity and, in particular, the development of a chaotic and inescapable mass market for consumer goods had the power to generate, or at least to inflect, a certain kind of historical knowledge. Put another way, the crisis of modernity produced what one could characterise – following Foucault, invoking Nietzsche, echoing Riegl – as a quite specific art-historical 'will-to-knowledge'. And, to borrow Wölfflin's formulation to use it against him, it is a will that we can see as clearly in the analysis of a shoe as in that of a cathedral, in the wilful transformation of fleeting fashion into stable style.

The New

I began by discussing art history but have ended up concentrating on the emergence of mass culture theory; that is why I have lingered so long over the forgotten debates of the turn of the century over fashion. Yet they were not entirely

forgotten. These debates had an important afterlife, for while they provided the foil to which historians, in particular art historians, developed notions of the past and tools with which to analyse it, they were also the starting point for some of the most important works of twentieth-century mass culture theory. When later thinkers about mass culture searched for analytical tools with which to approach the problem, many reached directly back to concepts developed in pre-war *Kulturkritik*, concepts developed during their own youth to address the phenomena they had experienced themselves, first-hand. They did not accept these concepts uncritically nor leave them unchanged. Yet neither the consumer culture of the 1920s and 1930s nor the theories that sought to account for it grew out of thin air; the economic and intellectual ground for both developments was fertile. In what follows, I would like to suggest how fundamental the pre-First World War discussions of style and fashion were to Theodor W. Adorno and Max Horkheimer's notion of 'culture industry' as developed in the chapter of that name in *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, to this day one of the most important statements of the problem.

The chapter, written in 1944, is subtitled 'Enlightenment as Mass Deception'. Using examples primarily from the film, radio and magazines of the 1930s, Horkheimer and Adorno discuss the social effects as well as stylistic characteristics of the standardised products of the entertainment industry, cultural items manufactured and distributed as commodities. Through the entertainment industry, they write, aesthetic experience is reified, robbing art of its balance of affirmation of internal law and critique of the society beyond itself; the seamless but false totality created by cultural commodities serves to form the decayed bourgeois ego into a malleable political subject; and the mass market, repressing the desires it arouses and mocking the happiness it promises, becomes the site at which the twentieth-century spiral of regression can be identified. Culture industry represents taste manipulated and administered in ways that reveal the totalitarian tendency of monopoly capitalism.

The culture industry thesis is well known. What is interesting here is not the thesis itself but rather something else, something that was certainly obvious to the first readers of *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, too obvious even to discuss, but that has receded beyond the historical horizon of more recent readers who assume that the reference points of this complex text could still be their own. What has become invisible is the way in which the discussion remains framed in the romantic anti-capitalist terms of the earlier, pre-war discussions of culture under capitalism. The familiar dichotomous categories of chaos versus unity, *Kultur* versus *Zivilisation*, and most importantly style versus fashion are the coordinates within which Adorno and Horkheimer construct their argument. Even as the very first line of the chapter states their rejection of the fundamental assumption of German *Kulturkritik*, it signals that the terms of this

discourse will be central to their argument. This starting point is the cultural despair we recognise well; now, however, Adorno and Horkheimer have a response to it: 'The sociological conviction that the loss of the support of objective religion, the dissolution of the last precapitalist residues, technical and social differentiation and specialisation have led to cultural chaos is disproved every day. Culture today stamps everything with the same mark.'[61] If the 'unity of all production' is the criterion, Adorno and Horkheimer assert, then *Kultur* is overwhelmingly in evidence under advanced capitalism.[62]

A few pages into the chapter, Adorno and Horkheimer narrow their focus to the categories of art history and reply similarly that the despair misses its target: 'The complaints of the art historians and the advocates of "culture" over the extinction of a style-creating force in the West,' they write, 'are horribly unfounded.' For the lack of style was a myth: the forms of the cultural goods which were being produced for the mass market in fact 'surpass the rigour and authority of true "style," the concept with which the educated idealise the precapitalist past as "organic."'[63] Adorno and Horkheimer move quite explicitly between the discursive coordinates we recognise, between the gothic with its putative concerns of spirit, and the mass market with its language of capital (though here the art-historical terms are iconographic, not formalist):

> No one who commissioned a medieval church can have scrutinised the subjects of the stained-glass windows more suspiciously than the directors of a studio would inspect the material supplied by Balzac or Victor Hugo before declaring it marketable. No synod can have more carefully distributed the grimaces of the devil and the torments of the damned in accordance with the *ordo* of divine love than the producers determine the torture of the hero or the raised skirt of the leading lady in the litany of a blockbuster film.[64]

Adorno and Horkheimer present a paradox. They find 'style' in precisely the kitsch of the culture industry usually considered 'fashion', for despite the 'permanent pressure to produce new effects', these goods nonetheless 'remain bound to old patterns'.[65] Rehearsing the clichés of the critique of fashion, they describe the realm of the mass market as one characterised by rapid change; but rather than revealing any inconstancy of spirit, fashion merely veils the iron consistency of the social system it serves: 'What is new in the phase of mass culture compared to late liberalism is the elimination of the new. The machine rotates on the same spot. . . . [Novelty] is served by tempo and change. Nothing can remain as it was; everything must be in perpetual motion. For only the universal triumph of the rhythm of mechanical production and reproduction ensures that nothing changes, that nothing emerges that does not fit in.' Change serves only 'the reproduction of the always-the-same [*des Immergleichen*]'.[66] It is this constancy of change and its paradoxical complicity with

the absolute permanence of the relations of production that Adorno and Horkheimer seek to demonstrate, and which they choose, revealingly, to characterise as style. But while the 'new style' of the culture industry is only a 'caricature' of the style longed for by cultural critics, it nonetheless reveals, in a dialectical reversal, a historical truth of styles in general: 'The concept of true style is transparently revealed by the culture industry as the aesthetic equivalent of domination. The conception of style as mere aesthetic consistency is a romantic fantasy projected on the past. In the unity of style . . . various structures of social power are expressed, not the obscure experience of the dominated'.[67] The totality of *Kultur* is not that of unalienated existence, but in fact alienation itself. It is quite simply the totality of domination.

The culture industry chapter reveals one of Adorno's favourite modes of argumentation, that of breaking down a false opposition. Instead of crudely and uncritically opposing fashion and style, Horkheimer and Adorno collapse the distinction, defining style dialectically in relation to fashion. Style, they write, wears a changing face, while fashion is timeless, hiding the always-the-same. Culture under capitalism reveals another side of the dialectic of enlightenment in which the irrational is rationalised and the rational in turn takes the mask of the irrational as an alibi.

But there is a problem here nonetheless. Even as Adorno and Horkheimer's text is a brilliant and ironic reply to turn-of-the-century discussions, it remains to a certain extent also a replay of them. For although it far exceeds and undermines received accounts of style, the culture industry chapter nonetheless invites readings of itself simply as a theory of fashion, hardly more subtle, for example, than Sombart's discernment of the 'unification of demand' behind the shifting surfaces of everyday commodities and its structural necessity for the reproduction of capital. 'The more firmly culture industry is established, the more summarily it can deal with the consumers' needs, producing, steering, disciplining them',[68] we read; and were the phrase 'culture industry' simply to be replaced with 'fashion', we might think this a text from the fin de siècle. Now the culture industry most emphatically *is* subtler than those earlier discussions; the collapsed distinction between style and fashion is the fulcrum of Adorno and Horkheimer's argument, and the dialectical juxtaposition of the two provides the motor of what might otherwise be a quite static argument. To take the notion of the culture industry out of the context of the style/fashion dialectic is to miss the irony that makes of every seemingly uninflected, monolithic statement – and there are many – a minor explosion meant to overturn a very particular way of thinking, that found in German cultural theory since the end of the nineteenth century.

It can at least be said that the argument of the culture industry chapter represents as much the end of a debate originating in the late nineteenth century

as the development of new terms with which to analyse a later stage of capitalist modernity. Adorno and Horkheimer seem strangely caught within the terms of the earlier discussions. They subject the notion of style as spirit to critique, seeing in the indisputable similarities of form not spirit but domination. But the turn-of-the-century notion of fashion remains largely unscathed; it displaces style and subsumes it but is itself untouched by the decades of capitalist development that separate their *Dialectic of Enlightenment* from Wölfflin's *Classic Art*. Fashion remains, monolithic, uninflected, anachronistic, preceding and forming any subjectivity, transcendent. Adorno and Horkheimer moved beyond style, but they could not move far enough beyond fashion to make the revision that their argument represents completely convincing.

To remove the art historians' notion of style from Adorno and Horkheimer's discussion of the culture industry is to flatten their argument and to rob it of its dialectical drive, just as removing the notion of fashion from some of the founding works of modern art historiography is to miss both the necessity and the pathos of the concept of style. Yet both the art historian and the critical theorists remain caught in a similar double bind resulting from the crudity of the opposition that structures the discourse of late nineteenth-century cultural criticism. Wölfflin set out to subject an inadequate notion of visual form to critique, but ended up shifting endlessly between style and fashion, divorced from both spirit and capital. In *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, the shifting of both form and thought is brought to a premature standstill, with the two poles of style and fashion immovably fixed as the visual manifestation of two kinds of absolute domination.

A notion of fashion that might still seem distressingly crude and insufficiently differentiated from that which animated German *Kulturkritik* remained in Adorno's work. One might point, for example, to one of Adorno's better-known essays, 'Timeless Fashion: On Jazz', whose very title is an oxymoron pointing to the paradoxical complicity of constancy and change, freedom and coercion which is discussed not only in *Dialectic of Enlightenment* but also in the earlier work of the sociologist and economist Werner Sombart.[69] Here too the economic terms with which he analyses jazz are derived from the critique of fashion, terms such as mass production, standardisation, pseudo-individualisation by incremental and arbitrary variation.[70] Clearly Adorno, a musician and composer, was as aware as anyone that the conditions of commercial music composition and distribution did not conform to those of, say, automobiles or dresses. His tactical simplification here must again be seen in terms of the implicit argument that contrasts fashion's hidden but rigid industrial mapping of the market with the authentic creative voice in order to undermine any superficial assumption that jazz, of whatever type, represents the latter. Adorno is still letting the terms of traditional cultural criticism make part of his argu-

ment for him, a strategy that has, ironically, led many to identify him with precisely that kind of mandarin critique.

There is, however, another line of thought in Adorno's work, one already clearly evident in the sections of the *Versuch über Wagner* published before the war and culminating in *Aesthetic Theory*, and one that frees the concepts of style and fashion from the work they had to do in arguments about culture industry, the critique of *Kulturkritik*, and allows them to develop in another direction.[71] It is a line of thought that lets style stand as the figure for social domination, but which subjects the intertwined notions of originality, the new and fashion to a more searching exploration than was attempted in *Dialectic of Enlightenment*. Ultimately it leads to the core of Adorno's aesthetic theory at the same time as it can be seen to mark an end to the historical trajectory of the concepts with which I began, the terms of art history and criticism. In *Aesthetic Theory*, at any rate, we can find a final reckoning with the concepts of style and fashion, one which loosens them from their standstill.

The notion of the 'new' is a central one in Adorno's posthumously published work that seeks to develop a theory of art in an age which saw a constant movement forward in the avant-garde, an age inaugurated by Baudelaire's paean to fashion and summed up in Rimbaud's dictum '*il faut être absolument moderne*'.[72] In his early section describing the 'situation' of the work of art in modernity, Adorno presents the constant changes that comprise modernism not only as something to be explained, but as a historical process with its own immanent truth content; this section is called, in consequence, 'The Philosophy of History of the New'. He relates constant change to the overwhelming effect of the power of production as wielded through the mass market: 'Novelty is, aesthetically, a historical development, the brand [*Marke*] of consumer goods which art appropriates and through which it distinguishes itself from an ever-identical product line, and through which it stimulates [consumption], obedient to the need for the accumulation of capital.'[73] By steps and stages, by distinctions drawn and then collapsed, Adorno points to the differences between fashion's generation of 'novelty' to stimulate demand, encouraging the needless replacement of objects, and the modern artwork's quest for the new in order to distance itself from works neutralised by culture industry. At the same time, however, he shows that the logic of capital and that of freedom paradoxically coincide. Art mimics the unfree sphere of the commodity, but it does so on its own terms, as the active agent, appropriating instead of simply being appropriated, and in doing so, it runs away from the standard 'product line' of culture. Adherence to fashion's imperative of absolute contemporaneity both rehearses the cultural form of address that is the sales pitch and serves as a strategy by which to escape it.

While novelty is a veil over the unchanging relations of its own production, the constant reminder in ever-new guise that nothing has changed, its cognate form of the new has a positive potential: 'Time and again, the temptation of freedom shines forth stronger from the threatening category of the New than its constricting, leveling, at times sterile aspects.'[74] That freedom, however, cannot be found in the negative forces of the market, where, we read, the limits of the new are too narrowly circumscribed: 'If originality has historic roots, so is it implicated with historical injustice: with the bourgeois prevalence of consumer goods on the market, goods that must feign the ever-new to gain their customers, though they are always-the-same. But with the increasing autonomy of art, originality has turned against the market, where it can never exceed a certain threshold.'[75] Novelty in the market could never step beyond a clearly defined limit; the seemingly marginal excess with which it is marked is subject to a strictly controlled calculus that compels it towards, and turns the excess into, surplus value. Recall the mutation that dresses underwent between 1913 and 1914, changes that might seem to offer a model of creativity or authenticity embedded in the iron grip of monopolistic market forces, but only too easily surrender to style by their implication in the wearers' assertion of social power, of identity with class power. Even the utopian new, writes Adorno, that 'temptation of freedom', falls prey to the domination of style. Here again he frames his point in terms of the historiography of art, in this case of the fantastical in art:

> Only an art historian would place Klee and [Alfred] Kubin under a common denominator. . . . Nothing is so damaging to theoretical knowledge of modern art than reducing it to its similarities with older art. Its specificity slips right through the model 'nothing new under the sun'; it is reduced to the level of a smooth, undialectical continuum of a steady evolution that it, in fact, explodes. The remorselessly inescapable fact that no interpretation of intellectual phenomena is possible without translating the new into something old is undeniable, but it is something of a betrayal as well. . . . The current tendency in the human sciences is virtually to prove that the New is impossible.[76]

The art historian's retrospective gaze that dates, classifies and subjects the formal irruptions of the past to the reified concepts of historical knowledge ignores this philosophy of history of the new, ignores the nature, meaning and truth of the imperative of modernity.

And what is its nature? The new is a case of compulsive complicity. Freedom is caught in the same forward rush as the debased consumer commodity, and while its mutations cannot be reduced to the market's cycle of fashions, they

cannot be separated from it either. Both the new and novelty serve to stimulate, but instead of the thrill of novelty or the '*dernier cri*', the new, writes Adorno, offers a *frisson* or a 'shudder' (*Schauer*) of a non-fungible kind. The 'shudder' accompanies what Adorno calls 'mimesis', a central but difficult category in his thought. For Adorno, mimesis is not merely the naturalistic approximation of the appearance of the world in representation, but is instead a kind of action and cognition in the form of immediate somatic response. It is knowledge that is sudden and physical rather than abstract and conceptual; it shows the potential of art to communicate knowledge at the same time as it shows the utopian possibility of its reconciliation with the state of nature.[77] In modernity, what art shows mimetically is, in fact, the very abstraction of the commodity form: 'The shudder . . . is the mimetic form of behavior that reacts to abstractness as mimesis. Only in the New is mimesis married to rationality without regression: what becomes mimetic in the shudder of the new is *Ratio* itself.'[78]

The new thus suspends the artwork between plenitude and void. First, there is the shudder that is the confrontation with the subjective emptiness of abstract rationality, a moment of truth. Second, this shudder cannot be named: 'The abstractness of the new is crucial; it can be known no more than the most horrible secret of Poe's pit.' [79] 'The New,' he continues, 'is a blind spot, empty as the perfect "look, here!" '[80] The perfect 'look, here!', the '*vollkommene Dies da*'. The new is in the blind spot; it can be indicated but never pinned down, seen but not grasped. Third, once this 'look, here!' can be named by turning it into a reified concept, once it can be classified by the art historian or appropriated by market forces, it presents itself as 'hollow'.[81] The blind spot, the 'look, here!' is the constantly shifting 'hidden telos'[82] of freedom, of truth, before it is frozen into concepts, recouped by instrumental reason. Finally, the epiphany of the new is fundamentally 'privative', 'more the negation of what must no longer be than positive speech'.[83]

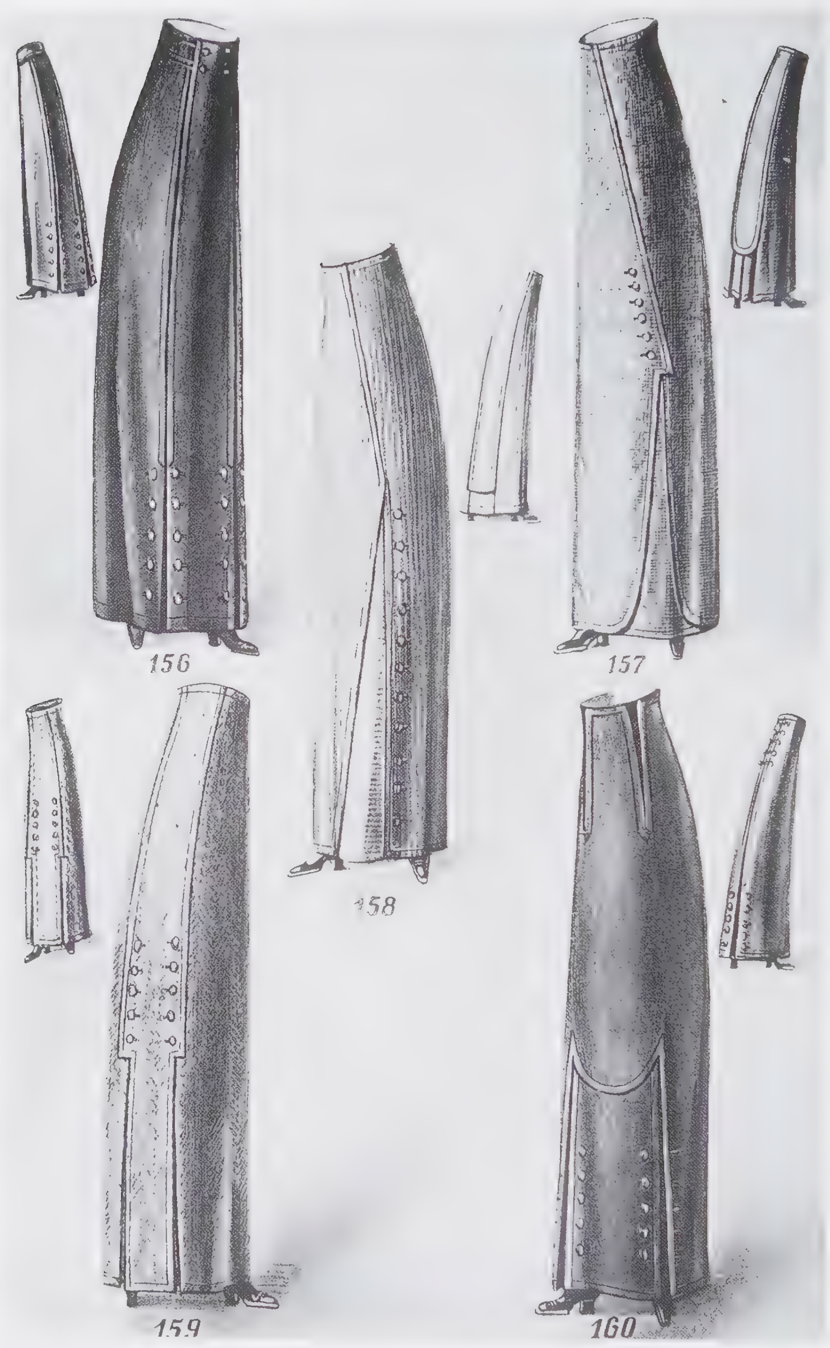
Remarks on style in *Aesthetic Theory* similarly suggest that art in modernity learned some of its most decisive lessons from fashion, and they fill out the argument sketched out above. If style for Adorno is the 'aesthetic equivalent of domination', as O. K. Werckmeister writes, then 'all great art, even before modernism, stands in a negative relation to style'.[84] But even if great art never bowed down before the strictures of a style, fashion is a historically new challenge to any sort of formal hegemony, one whose very principle is the negation of the old or the accepted.[85] And it is this negation that shows a first way out of the double bind of the style–fashion opposition. Fashion as the new, for Adorno, has the potential to falsify the false, the bad totality of systems of repression that are sedimented in style and artistic tradition; in it are the seeds of revolution. (Adorno might well have recalled the insight of Benjamin – who

Bernini, *The Blessed Ludovica Albertoni,* illustrated in Wölfflin, *Kunstgeschichtliche Grundbegriffe.*

had taught him so much about fashion – that the word for 'sale' in French department stores is '*révolution*'.[86])

A notion of the falsification of the false, however, does not go far enough in explaining why Rimbaud's dictum becomes not merely a symptom of market pathology but the normative decree for art as well, as normative as style was once thought to be; there must be other reasons why 'great artists since Baudelaire have conspired with fashion'. Rimbaud's norm, of course, 'takes recourse to something unconscious, to the innervation, to the disgust with the stale and familiar', and this unconscious sensibility, clearly, 'is quite close to that which is anathema to the cultural conservative, to fashion'. But in its resistance to what really exists, Adorno continues, fashion has another sort of truth, one which he describes as an 'unconscious consciousness of the temporal core of art, to the extent that it is not manipulated by culture industry and administration'.[87]

Again Adorno is turning the tables on cultural conservatism, here using the concept of fashion to mount a new sort of critique of the work of art that claims to speak the language of transcendent culture. The permanence of style was seen to reflect the constancy of spirit, but 'the idea of permanence is modeled on the category of property' and is thus time-bound, ephemeral. For the work



From *Internationale Damenmode*, 1911.

of art to maintain any relation to objective truth, it must negate this anachronistic sense of duration: 'Conceivable today, perhaps required, are works that through their temporal core immolate themselves, whose life goes under without a trace in the moment of its appearance'.[88] Adorno is not, as has been pointed out, referring to 'happenings';[89] nor is he suggesting that art merely mimic the cheap goods that roused the ire of a bourgeois mandarinate, thereby negating notions of art that were, by the middle of the century, utterly compromised. Rather he is pointing to the tendency he saw for art to negate the pretense of aesthetic truth as timeless, the belief that an artwork's capacity to grasp truth could be kept, preserved, or repeated. An artwork could only speak the truth by the very fact that it no longer does so after its creation; a solution ceases to be authentic once it takes form and can therefore become the basis of a tradition or a style: 'Whatever circumvents changes in [artistic] material that lead to important innovations . . . immediately presents itself as . . . impotent.'[90] The new pushes works of art on, 'irresistibly', leaving not a monument to timeless truth but the void of the 'look, here!', an empty vessel that cannot be refilled.

In the so-called 'Paralipomena', notes that Adorno did not live to integrate into *Aesthetic Theory*, are some final thoughts on fashion. Whether in the mass market or embedded in the change of modes in the avant-garde, he writes, fashion gives the lie to what Benjamin called the aura that surrounded the work of art:

> By breaking the aesthetic taboos [that upheld] inwardness, timelessness and depth, one can see [in fashion] how the relation of art to these ideals (themselves quite suspect) has been degraded to mere pretense. Fashion is art's permanent confession that it is not what it claims to be and what on its own terms it must be. . . . [Fashion] cannot be so cleanly separated from art as the bourgeois religion of art would have it. Since the aesthetic subject has polemically broken off from society and its prevailing spirit, art communicates with this objective spirit, untrue as it is, through fashion.[91]

Fashion shows what the official guardians of spirit cannot understand in the work of art in modernity, the promise of plenitude it would have to break; yet fashion is also, paradoxically, what let such works communicate at all, for only the alienated object could speak for the alienated subject. '[T]hus fashion, despairing of the possibility of . . . any reconciliation, appropriates alienation itself.'[92] This formulation is a clear echo of the description of the artwork's mimetic response to capitalist abstraction, the convergence, as Adorno writes, of the 'absolute artwork' with the 'absolute commodity'.[93]

The concept of style posited a perfect correspondence of spirit and form. For Adorno, this relation can be stable only in a static state of unfreedom. If, for Hegel, art is driven forward (and ultimately superseded) as spirit overcomes its distance and alienation from the world, for Adorno this alienation can only be overcome in modernity by asserting precisely this distance at the same time as the abstraction of the commodity is grasped mimetically. This too is a forward movement, but one of stumbling towards a goal that disappears as soon as it is reached. It is a situation that Adorno captures in a striking image: 'Art, as illusion, is the dress of an invisible body. Thus fashion is dress as an absolute.'[94] Art expresses freedom by pointing to its absence: that is its truth, revealed by its insistent and unexpected congruencies with fashion. Art is torn from its easy relation to truth, be it body or spirit. Wölfflin's body evaporates, drained of spirit and unable to hold its posture, its attitude, leaving only the most ephemeral fashionable commodity to speak for it. It was only with the recognition of the dialectical truth of fashion that the death of the concept of style could be proclaimed with any certainty and the final nail driven into the coffin that Wölfflin seemed set to build. It took so long because the body inside was invisible; what the body was to represent could only be understood in the recognition of its absence. The coffin was not, as Wölfflin had feared, overfull, but rather empty.

DISTRACTION

WALTER BENJAMIN AND THE AVANT-GARDE

'And you, my painter of paradise, what toy have you discovered?'

'Here,' said the painter, 'is the main signal from the railway junction where the track of the P – M line crosses the Pontarlier – M* line. I took advantage of a moment of distraction on the part of the railway guard to remove it, so that precisely now, as I present to you this beautiful red flower encircled in white, the 24.30 express is colliding with the 00.29 direct train due to the absence of this customary warning.'*

Anicet could not help himself from comparing this last gift to a blood stain, an eye, a sexual organ, or a fairy's hat, but he had to agree that the painter had compared it to a flower excellently, and he admired the geometric elegance of its iron stem.

– Louis Aragon, *Anicet ou le Panorama*[1]

Revolution is still an empty page in the thousand-page book of time.

– Vladimir Mayakovsky, *For the Voice*[2]

The Blur at the Centre

Walter Benjamin's essay 'The Work of Art in the Age of its Technical Reproducibility' of 1935/36 is a compelling yet ambivalent description of the decline of a mode of encountering artworks that had prevailed – so he argues – for several millennia. Benjamin writes of the state of *contemplation*, the *passive* approach of the participant in ritual or the bourgeois cult of art, and of the spell of the *aura*, that 'strange weave of space and time: unique appearance of distance, so near [something] may be'.[3] These categories are familiar to us: they are now regular points of reference and debate. And yet Benjamin's

account of the new and potentially revolutionary mode of reception of the image is certainly every bit as important to the argument of the Artwork essay as is the evocation of forms of attention that no longer obtain. His hopes for film and photography are stated clearly enough, centring on a constellation that describes a revolutionary viewer's mode of apperception as *distracted*, his approach as *critical*, his task as that of *testing*, and his position as corresponding to that of an *expert*. 'It is inherent in the technique of the film,' he writes in section X, 'that everybody who witnesses its accomplishments is somewhat of an expert.' As in the Soviet Union, such 'experts' would not be narrow 'specialists' but 'polytechnically trained'. 'The public,' he writes in section XV, 'is an examiner, but a distracted one.'[4]

The notions of a critical vision and a distracted expert clearly form the dialectical obverses to the more familiar categories of the aura's decline and decay. And yet Benjamin's briefly sketched cultural phenomenology of revolution pales beside his richly allusive description of obsolete modes of reception. Indeed, the idea of a state of 'distraction' (*Zerstreuung*) and the notion of the 'expert' (*Fachmann* or *Sachverständiger*) are perhaps the least adequately defined and the least satisfying in the essay. If some philosophers give their concepts proper names (as Benjamin did with the 'aura', with the 'dialectical image', with 'allegory' and 'myth'), these two terms remain stubbornly in the lower case – general, unexamined, unmentioned in the glosses and glossaries of Benjamin's work, with their everyday meanings as an alibi for their mysteriously blurred contours.[5] I would like to return our attention to precisely these concepts that have proven so difficult to focus on, and then to work towards establishing historical coordinates by which we might understand why they remain so inadequately developed. The reason for doing so is two-fold. First, these ideas let us focus on the relation of Benjamin to the avant-garde in the visual arts at his time. Second, and more importantly, focusing on joints, seams and thin patches tells us much about the way Benjamin thought, about the problems he faced as a materialist thinking about a changing culture, and about the impossible challenge of forming effective concepts at a moment, as he put it, of danger.[6]

Book-space

The expert appears in Benjamin's work, perhaps tentatively, in the years 1925 to 1928, the years of the drafting of his collection of sketches and aphorisms *One-Way Street*. The book is filled with descriptions of the author who uses the tools of culture as a technician instead of as an artist, as a politically active

manipulator of documents instead of as an antisocial creator and savourer of works of art; he is polytechnically trained instead of limited by specialisation. *One-Way Street* opens with reflections on the nature of literary work in an age when everyone is, potentially, a productive worker or expert of some sort. They are reflections that seek, like those in the Artwork essay, to take into account modern conditions of visuality and, in this case, textuality:

> The construction of life is at present in the power of facts far more than of convictions. . . . Under these circumstances true literary activity cannot claim to take place within a literary framework. . . . Significant literary work can only come into being in a rigorous alternation between action and writing; it must develop the inconspicuous forms that better correspond to its influence in active communities than does the pretentious, universal gesture of the book – in leaflets, brochures, newspaper articles and posters. Only this prompt language shows itself actively equal to the moment.[7]

The expert's features are a bit hazy in Benjamin's work of the 1920s, and he appears in several guises. The most famous is as the critic who is not an arbiter of taste but a 'strategist in the literary struggle'.[8] He also appears at roughly the same time in a less favourable light as the 'hack'.[9] In any case, the unifying theme of this phase in Benjamin's work is the *labour* of the writer in modernity, the work of a practitioner of culture who has a job to do, and needs to support himself by it as well. Benjamin's work and letters of this period show an obsessive concern with what one could call 'tricks of the trade', and many of the sketches in *One-Way Street* take the ironic form of the primer: 'How to Write Fat Books', 'The Critic's Technique in Thirteen Theses', and so on. Many of these are tongue-in-cheek, but the obsession was a very real one, as notes of his meetings with cultural journalists such as Egon Erwin Kisch show.[10]

The reason for this concern is certainly that Benjamin had been rudely ejected from the academy with the failure of his attempt to qualify for university teaching with his *Habilitation* on German tragic drama and his parents' subsequent withdrawal of financial support.[11] His reaction was by turns petulant and intrigued; he was demeaned by the task of gathering tiny commissions at the same time as he was fascinated by his new contact with the means of cultural production. From his huge production of reviews, essays and literary tidbits to the new turn taken in his engagement with Baudelaire, his attempt in this period to turn personal misfortune into intellectual capital is nothing if not impressive.

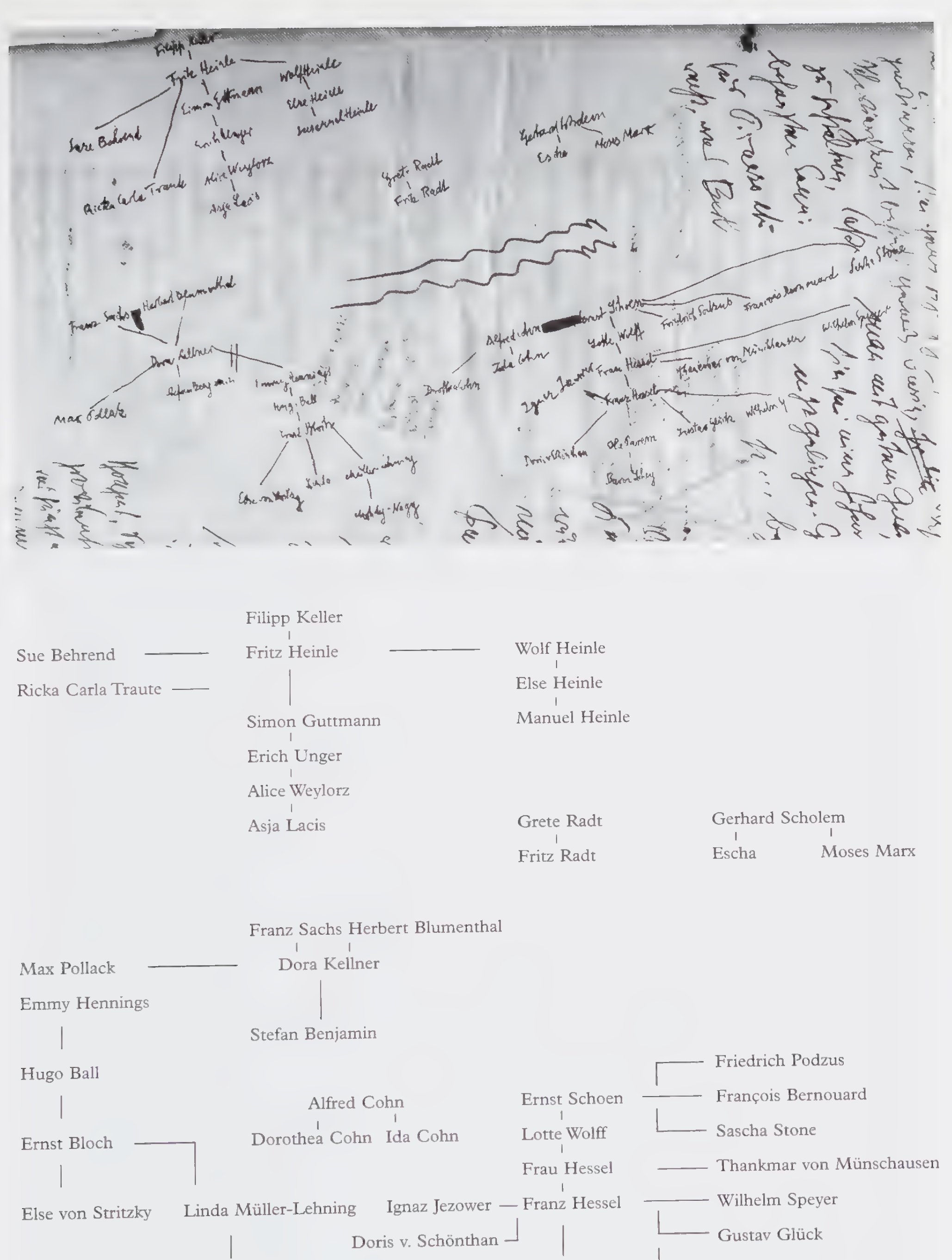
In his new career as a freelance critic, the contacts Benjamin had been cultivating with advanced artistic circles stood him in good stead. Unexpectedly, perhaps, these contacts were with the avant-garde of the visual arts, and not literature. From 1923 onwards he moved at the margins of a circle of con-

Sasha Stone, photomontage cover for Walter Benjamin, *Einbahnstraße* (Berlin, 1928), back.

Sasha Stone, photomontage cover for Walter Benjamin, *Einbahnstraße* (Berlin, 1928), front.

structivists that included the photographers Werner Gräff and Sasha Stone, the painters El Lissitzky and Theo van Doesburg, the polymath László Moholy-Nagy, the critics Adolf Behne and Sigfried Giedion, the filmmaker Hans Richter and others. He appears on a list compiled by Gräff of potential contributors to the legendary journal *G: Material zur Gestaltung*, in the first issue of which he published a translation of an essay by Tristan Tzara on Man Ray.[12] He was also, along with Ernst Bloch, a regular contributor to the Dutch journal *i10*, for which Moholy-Nagy served as film and photography editor.[13] The importance of these contacts to Benjamin's thinking about visual matters was apparently considerable. When he sought, in the late 1920s, to outline the path of his personal and intellectual life, he produced an extraordinary diagram 'resembling a series of family trees', one he lost but sought on several occasions to reproduce. One version that has been preserved includes the names of only two visual artists. Both were members of the Berlin constructivist avant-garde, and both were photographers. They are Stone and Moholy-Nagy.[14]

Sasha Stone was one of Benjamin's closest friends at the time; it is he who designed the photomontage cover of *One-Way Street*.[15] More importantly, this figure who has received so little critical attention bears many of the traits of the practitioner-expert, the notion that Benjamin constructed at the time. Stone was polytechnically trained, and the ultimate improviser of the type repeatedly invoked in *One-Way Street*. 'These are days', writes Benjamin, 'when no one should rely unduly on his "qualifications". Strength lies in improvisation'.[16] Consider in this light a short biography, a classic of its kind, the stuff of a particular sort of modern myth. Stone was born in Russia and moved to Warsaw at the age of thirteen, where he took a degree in electrical engineering. Soon thereafter he emigrated to America, landing in New York (it is said) with only thirty-five dollars in his pocket. An article of 1930 describes his early career as follows: 'With irresistible force he was attracted to technology. By chance he met an intelligent airplane engineer, to whom he apprenticed himself for 1½ years as a draughtsman. He carried out everything to which he set his mind, and his efforts ended in his working under the great Edison.'[17] He established a welding firm, giving this up to serve as an airplane pilot in the First World War. After the war he made his way to Paris, studied art and sculpture, then moved to Berlin and turned to photography as an autodidact. It is in this field that he made his name. But though trained as an artist, he understood his work in the light of his technical experience, rejecting 'art' as a way of describing his activities. It is in fact Stone whom Benjamin quotes by name in his 'Small History of Photography' when he writes that 'photography as art . . . is very dangerous territory'.[18] Stone was a practitioner who never disguised the commercial nature of his work, which was cheerfully derivative and often based on tricks and wit of the kind beloved of the readers of the illustrated



Walter Benjamin, autobiograhical diagram (and key) from a notebook of *c.*1928 30. Scholem Collection, Jewish National and University Library, Jerusalem.

Sasha Stone, self-portrait with inscription, n.d. From *Sasha Stone, Fotografien 1925–39* (Berlin, 1990).

Lucia Moholy, *Portrait of Moholy-Nagy*, 1926. Photograph courtesy Bauhaus-Archiv, Berlin. Photograph Bauhaus-Archiv Berlin, © DACS 2005.

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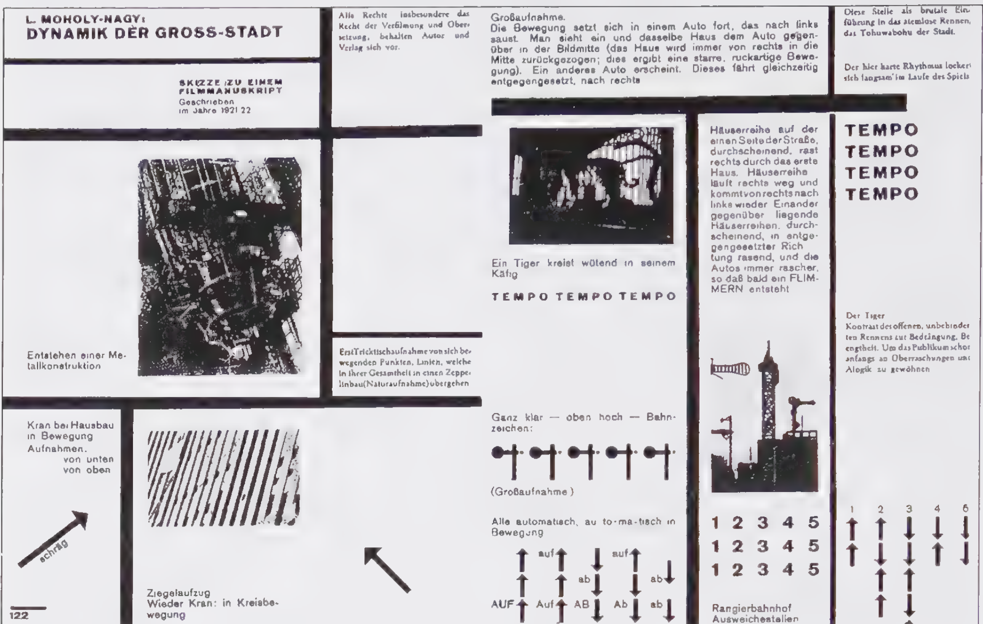

L. MOHOLY-NAGY:
DYNAMIK DER GROSS-STADT

SKIZZE ZU EINEM FILMMANUSKRIPT
Geschrieben im Jahre 1921 22

Alle Rechte insbesondere das Recht der Verfilmung und Übersetzung, behalten Autor und Verlag sich vor.

Entstehen einer Metallkonstruktion

ErstTricktischaufnahme von sich bewegenden Punkten, Linien, welche in ihrer Gesamtheit in einen Zeppelinbau(Naturaufnahme)übergehen

Kran bei Hausbau in Bewegung Aufnahmen.
von unten
von oben

schräg

Ziegelaufzug
Wieder Kran: in Kreisbewegung

Großaufnahme.
Die Bewegung setzt sich in einem Auto fort, das nach links saust. Man sieht ein und dasselbe Haus dem Auto gegenüber in der Bildmitte (das Haus wird immer von rechts in die Mitte zurückgezogen; dies ergibt eine starre, ruckartige Bewegung). Ein anderes Auto erscheint. Dieses fährt gleichzeitig entgegengesetzt, nach rechts

Ein Tiger kreist wütend in seinem Käfig

TEMPO TEMPO TEMPO

Ganz klar — oben hoch — Bahnzeichen:

(Großaufnahme)

Alle automatisch, au to-ma-tisch in Bewegung

auf auf
ab ab
AUF Auf AB Ab ab

Häuserreihe auf der einen Seite der Straße, durchscheinend, rast rechts durch das erste Haus. Häuserreihe läuft rechts weg und kommt von rechts nach links wieder Einander gegenüber liegende Häuserreihen, durchscheinend, in entgegengesetzter Richtung rasend, und die Autos immer rascher, so daß bald ein FLIMMERN entsteht

1 2 3 4 5
1 2 3 4 5
1 2 3 4 5

Rangierbahnhof
Ausweichestellen

Diese Stelle als brutale Einführung in das atemlose Rennen, das Tohuwabohu der Stadt.

Der hier harte Rhythmus lockert sich langsam im Laufe des Spiels

TEMPO
TEMPO
TEMPO
TEMPO

Der Tiger
Kontrast des offenen, unbehinderten Rennens zur Bedingung, Beengtheit. Um das Publikum schon anfangs an Überraschungen und Alogik zu gewöhnen

1 2 3 4 6

122

magazines for which he worked (along with avant-garde journals such as *Die Form* and *Das neue Berlin*), but was also technically polished and 'promptly' made for an 'insignificant' form.[19] He understood photography as technique or the production of documents, not art; and he thought of himself in terms of expertise, not inspiration. A self-portrait photograph of the period is unambiguous: in his workingman's *Monteuranzug* or mechanic's overalls, Stone presents himself as a worldly and reliable technical expert.

Looking closely at the criticism Benjamin published in the years after the failed *Habilitation* for signs of his contacts with the avant-garde, however, it is the work of the other photographer from the diagram – the Hungarian Moholy-Nagy, professor at Walter Gropius's Bauhaus from 1923 to 1928 – that seems to have left the most lasting traces. Indeed, for the rest of his years Benjamin was fond of quoting from Moholy's 1925 Bauhaus book *Painting, Photography, Film*.[20] In the 1920s Moholy too played the part of the technician in a mechanic's overall. Was he, perhaps, also an expert?

Painting, Photography, Film, in any case, shows a careful consideration of issues of visual attention of the kind that preoccupied Benjamin from his earliest grappling with neo-Kantianism through the late Artwork essay.[21] Consider the focal point of the book, a manifesto of the New Typography called 'Dynamic of the Metropolis', a sort of storyboard for a film that was never

FACING PAGE From László Moholy-Nagy, 'Dynamik der Großstadt', *Malerei, Fotografie, Film*, second edition (Munich, 1928).

RIGHT László Moholy-Nagy, *Composition with Telegraph Wires and Railway Signal*, *c.*1920, ink and gouache on transparent paper. Collection S. and G. Poppe, Hamburg, © DACS 2005.

made. The 'film' takes us through the modern metropolis and explores the new sensory experiences it offers: unusual angles (a train seen from beneath a bridge, a city square seen from above); strange encounters; a barrage of numbers, symbols, and texts; flashing lights. What is stressed most of all is the speed of these impressions – 'cars whistling past', 'breathless race', the sudden plunging into a tunnel, and 'Tempo Tempo Tempo' in nearly every spread. It is the speed of traffic and the perception mediated by machinery and motion that is the subject of the film, one perhaps best exemplified by the experience of the railroad. The very first spread shows a photograph of a shunting yard, and Moholy had his typesetters approximate railway signals, to be shown moving up and down, automatically, in close-up.[22] The experience of the motion, speed and power of the train, the new and violently changing perceptions it created, was also a theme of an early series of Moholy's 'railway pictures'.

The powerful asymmetry, use of abstract signs, numbers, the insertion of photographs into the page, type's liberation from the horizontal left-to-right, top-to-bottom linear movement – all can be seen to reflect the exciting new urban life of the eye in motion. But Moholy is doing more than that. In fact, the relation between typography and content reveals a more ambitious goal: rather than simply expressing these experiences, the work represents and

explores the conditions in which perception and therefore visual communication had come to take place. The 'widened range of present and future visual experiences . . . the simultaneous effects of perceptual events (big city) permit and require an entirely new level in the visual typographic sphere'.[23] 'Dynamic of the Metropolis' shows what this might look like; it was meant to suggest the form of visual communication adequate to the new conditions of attention, perception and thought.

Similarly, *One-Way Street* is Benjamin's statement of the path he had found out of the confines of older forms of cultural work that were no longer in harmony with the conditions of their own creation and consumption, conditions he was feeling acutely in his new career. And even before one opens the book, Stone's photomontage cover situates us in the very same constellation of movement and vision that we recognise from Moholy's work. It shows the bustle of the city street, the new commercial and vehicular conditions of reading, and with the repetition of one-way street signs whose wide borders are printed in the New Typographers' bright red, it shows how order was imposed visually on the chaos of modern traffic. The photomontage also shows that commonplace of Moholy's sense of modern vision: above the top of the foreground one-way street sign we see a railway signal. But here, it seems to function as an advertisement: a store sign for a carpet shop. It is a bit of urban wit, a one-liner whose meaning would have been clear to city dwellers of the time: a signal halting pedestrian traffic and directing it into the shop. Close inspection reveals the importance attached (whether by Benjamin or Stone, we do not know) to the train signal: it is in fact drawn over the photograph, though it might have shown faintly under the artist's or lithographer's pen.[24]

Benjamin's opening section on modern textuality and the problem of a 'prompt language' goes on to follow the footsteps, or stations, of Moholy's exploration of urban vision. Certainly it is marked by the rhetoric of machine-aesthetic constructivism, but Benjamin was probably familiar too with Moholy's ideas on the importance of 'inconspicuous forms' that correspond to the work of 'active communities'. In 1925, for example, Moholy had written about 'the monotonous grey of recent books . . . [T]he majority of our books are by no means superior to Gutenberg's productions in their typographical-visual-synoptical form . . . As far as newspapers, posters and job printing are concerned, the situation is much better, since whatever typographical development has taken place has only been in these areas'.[25] *One-Way Street* is, not incidentally, precisely one of those 'inconspicuous forms' of job printing: it is printed as a brochure, a small, thin volume with a flexible paper cover.

Benjamin's notion of a 'prompt language' was in fact a commonplace of the typographical avant-garde. Writing in a special Bauhaus issue of the journal *Offset*, Moholy's student Josef Albers opposed the 'running type of uniformly

Sasha Stone, photomontage cover for Walter Benjamin, *Einbahnstraße*, detail.

placed elements, corresponding to running speech', which he equates with 'epic language', to the current demand for the speed and economy of the 'stenogram and telegram and code'. 'We must read fast, as we must speak sparely. Only the schools still forbid us to speak in incomplete sentences, and this is wrong. . . . So we must distance ourselves from the book. Most printed matter no longer consists of books.'[26] Similarly, Benjamin writes of 'the archaic stillness of the book.'[27]

For the New Typographers, the speed with which the advertisement needed to make its impression made it the model for typography of any kind – it was their school of what Moholy called the language created by 'visual-associative-conceptual-synthetic continuity'.[28] In the section of *One-Way Street* entitled 'Attested Auditor of Books', Benjamin makes much the same point with the example of Mallarmé and the dadaists, but he certainly had the New Typography in mind when he wrote that

> Printing, having found in the book a refuge in which to lead an autonomous existence, is pitilessly dragged out onto the street by advertisements and subjected to the brutal heteronomies of economic chaos. This is the hard schooling of its new form. If centuries ago it began gradually to lie down . . . before finally taking to bed in the printed book, it now begins . . . to rise again. . . . [F]ilm and advertisement force the printed word entirely into the dictatorial perpendicular.[29]

EINFÜHRUNG

1.

In diesem Buch versuche ich die Problematik der heutigen optischen Gestaltung zu fassen. Die Mittel, die uns die Fotografie in die Hand gegeben hat, spielen darin eine wichtige und von den meisten heute noch verkannte Rolle: in der Erweiterung der Grenzen der Naturdarstellung ebenso wie in der Verwendung des Lichtes als Gestaltungsfaktor: Hell-dunkel an Stelle des Pigments.

Der fotografische Apparat hat uns überraschende Möglichkeiten geliefert, mit deren Auswertung wir eben erst beginnen. In der Erweiterung des Sehbildes ist selbst das heutige Objektiv schon nicht mehr an die engen Grenzen unseres Auges gebunden; kein manuelles Gestaltungsmittel (Bleistift, Pinsel usw.) vermag ähnlich gesehene Ausschnitte aus der Welt festzuhalten; ebenso unmöglich ist es dem manuellen Gestaltungsmittel, eine Bewegung in ihrem Kern zu fixieren; auch die Verzerrungsmöglichkeiten des Objektivs – Untersicht, Obersicht, Schrägsicht – sind keineswegs nur negativ zu werten, sondern geben eine unvoreingenommene Optik, die unsere an Assoziationsgesetze gebundenen Augen nicht leisten; und von einem andern Gesichtspunkt: die Feinheit der Grauwirkungen ergibt einen sublimierten Wert, dessen Differenzierung außer dem eigenen Wirkungsbereich selbst der Farbengestaltung zugute kommen kann. Doch sind mit dieser Aufzählung noch weit nicht die Grenzen der Möglichkeiten auf diesem Gebiet gegeben. Wir stehen erst am Anfang der Auswertung; denn – obwohl die Fotografie schon über hundert Jahre alt ist, hat der Entwicklungsgang es doch erst in den letzten Jahren erlaubt, über das Spezifische hinaus die Gestaltungskonsequenzen zu erkennen. Seit kurzem erst ist unser Sehen reif geworden zur Erfassung dieser Zusammenhänge.

5

TIEFBAU-ARBEITEN

Im Traum sah ich ein ödes Gelände. Das war der Marktplatz von Weimar. Dort wurden Ausgrabungen veranstaltet. Auch ich scharrte ein bißchen im Sande. Da kam die Spitze eines Kirchturms hervor. Hoch erfreut dachte ich mir: ein mexikanisches Heiligtum aus der Zeit des Präanimismus, dem Anaquivitzli. Ich erwachte mit Lachen. (Ana = ἀνά; vi = vie; witz = mexikanische Kirche [!])

COIFFEUR FÜR PENIBLE DAMEN

Dreitausend Damen und Herren vom Kurfürstendamm sind eines Morgens wortlos aus den Betten zu verhaften und vierundzwanzig Stunden festzusetzen. Um Mitternacht verteilt man in den Zellen einen Fragebogen über die Todesstrafe, ersucht auch dessen Unterzeichner, anzugeben, welche Hinrichtungsart sie persönlich im gegebenen Falle zu wählen dächten. Dies Schriftstück hätten in Klausur „nach bestem Wissen" die auszufüllen, die bisher nur ungefragt sich „nach bestem Gewissen" zu äußern pflegten. Noch vor der ersten Frühe, die von alters heilig, hierzulande aber dem Henker geweiht ist, wäre die Frage der Todesstrafe geklärt.

ACHTUNG STUFEN!

Arbeit an einer guten Prosa hat drei Stufen: eine musikalische, auf der sie komponiert, eine architektonische, auf der sie gebaut, endlich eine textile, auf der sie gewoben wird.

Moholy's 'New Typography' is also the printing idiom Benjamin chose for *One-Way Street*. The pages are 'no longer classics' but marked by a heavy asymmetric rule, oversize page numbers and subject headings in bold sans-serif jobbing type.

Benjamin's circumspection contrasts soberly with the ecstatic rhetoric of the constructivists; and there is no doubt that in the lessons he learned, he far exceeds his sources. For one, his analysis of the way advertising conventions work their visual form into the most hermetic of poetry (Mallarmé's *Un Coup de dés*) contains a sense of the monadic appearance, in the autonomous work of art, of the social and economic givens surrounding it; he also has a far more subtle sense of precisely these givens than the avant-garde artists, whose own social situation demanded a different sort of knowledge and practice. But if Moholy could write that 'even philosophical works' will one day be printed in the same way as 'American magazines',[30] it is certainly worth entertaining the possibility that Benjamin took this statement more seriously than its author did.

In any case, Benjamin and Moholy were walking the same beat. *One-Way Street* replicates the city promenade of Moholy's 'Dynamic of the Metropolis'. But if the typographers of the avant-garde played the part of experts in the realm of visual attention and printed communication, Benjamin nonetheless goes beyond them in exploring new conditions of textuality, knowledge and ultimately, if still tentatively, politics. Benjamin's walk through the modern city

FACING PAGE, LEFT From László Moholy-Nagy, *Malerei, Fotografie, Film*, second edition (Munich, 1928).

FACING PAGE, RIGHT From Walter Benjamin, *Einbahnstraße*.

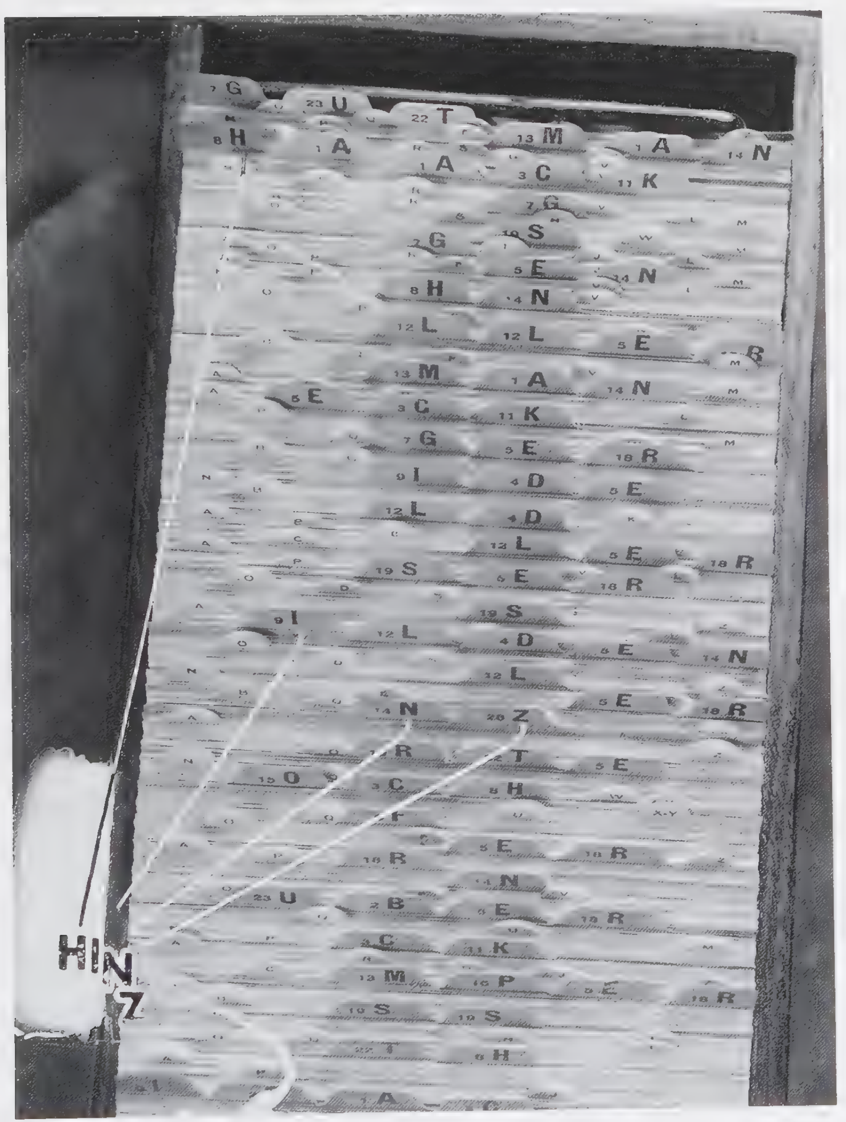
RIGHT El Lissitzky and Vladimir Mayakovsky, *Dlia golosa* (For the voice), 1923. From Jan Tschichold, *Die neue Typografie* (Berlin, 1928).

takes the form of a literary montage of observations, short essays, dream reports, and lists under the headings of the quick, verbal jolts of urban commerce – warnings, advertisements, labels and street signs. It opens with the observations cited under the title of 'Filling Station'; there is a simple 'No. 113'; a sign for a 'grandly furnished ten-room apartment'; and so on. The book seeks to establish a correspondence between the shocks and discontinuities of urban existence and a new form of knowledge for the distracted viewer and thinker. This knowledge is sought in the anonymous urban texts of streets, hotels, and newspapers, thoughts contained by, and coaxed out of, commodified words. The rubrics announce the contents as information instead of narrative, and they consistently subvert our expectations of logic; there is no satisfaction here for the reader trained in the school of the book. There is no plot and seldom a developed argument, but merely a series of sharply focused fragments, quick images, or allegorical shreds with no 'epic' claims to totality or consistency of knowledge. We are presented with constantly shifting focuses of attention that provide rubrics for observations and explorations into the real mysteries and often surreal facts of metropolitan life, politics and death.

If Benjamin's intense engagement with the surrealists has usually – and rightly – provided reference points by which *One-Way Street* is read, I am arguing that it must also be considered in terms of a book-space that was opened up specifically by constructivism.[31] The notion of a 'book-space' is one that can be taken quite literally: it is a term that Benjamin might have been

Sasha Stone, from the photo-essay 'The Hundred Horse-Power Office – No Longer a Utopia' (Das 100-Pferdige Büro – Keine Utopie), *Uhu*, 1926. Photograph ullstein bild, Berlin.

familiar with, one coined by the polytechnically trained Soviet artist El Lissitzky during his Berlin phase.[32] The phrase comes from his 'Topography of Typography' in Kurt Schwitters's journal *Merz* in 1923, a set of short theses of the kind often used ironically by Benjamin in *One-Way Street*.[33] Benjamin would also, no doubt, have known Lissitzky's design of Vladimir Mayakovsky's



Sasha Stone, from the photo-essay 'The Hundred Horse-Power Office – No Longer a Utopia' (Das 100-Pferdige Büro – Keine Utopie), *Uhu*, 1926. Photograph ullstein bild, Berlin.

book of poems *For the Voice*,[34] which is notable not only for the 'pictorial paraphrases of their contents',[35] but also for the thumb-index which allows the reader to enter into and navigate around the book, backwards or forwards, at the same time as it collapses the distance between the literary artefact and the documentary form of textuality whose home is the modern bureaucratic

archive. This was one of the forms of 'prompt language' to which Benjamin refers in *One-Way Street*. Here he writes about the 'demands of business life' on the written text:

> The card index marks the conquest of three-dimensional writing. . . . [T]oday the book [itself] is already . . . an outdated mediation between two different filing systems. For everything that matters is to be found in the card box of the researcher who wrote it, and the scholar studying it assimilates it into his own card index.[36]

Thus text or image become not only spatial but tactile, as photographs taken by Sasha Stone around the time he was designing the cover of *One-Way Street* show. In an article on 'The Hundred Horsepower Office' for the illustrated magazine *Uhu*, Stone himself poses as a white-collar worker whose grasp is aimed at a bull's-eye whose centre is defined by the spelling of a name.

'Book-space': traditional culture's flat printed page and its steady, orderly unfolding of information was clearly no longer valid as a model of the organisation of visual attention for the modern subject surrounded by a world of machines, traffic and text. In the Artwork essay Benjamin proposes a different sort of three-dimensional space as a model of vision or attention that is described as tactile, distracted, collective and expert. It is architecture:

> A man who concentrates before a work of art is absorbed by it. . . . In contrast, the distracted mass absorbs the work of art. . . . Architecture has always represented the prototype of art the reception of which is consummated by a collectivity in a state of distraction. . . .
>
> Buildings are appropriated . . . by use and by perception – or rather, by touch and sight. . . . Tactile appropriation is accomplished not so much by attention as by habit. . . . This mode of appropriation, developed with reference to architecture, in certain circumstances acquires canonical value. For the tasks which face the human apparatus of perception at the turning points of history cannot be solved by optical means, that is, by contemplation alone. They are mastered gradually by habit, under the guidance of tactile appropriation.[37]

The constructivists also had a notion of distraction, which they contrasted something like 'aura'. In *Painting, Photography, Film*, which Benjamin knew so well, Moholy wrote of

> a state of increased activity in the observer, who – instead of *meditating* upon a static image and instead of immersing himself in it . . . is forced . . . simultaneously to comprehend and to participate in the optical events. Kinetic composition . . . enables the observer . . . to participate, to seize instantly upon new moments of vital insight.[38]

And in a passage from Jan Tschichold's famous 'elementare typographie' issue of *Typographische Mitteilungen*, we find the notion of aura and distraction put into political and class terms:

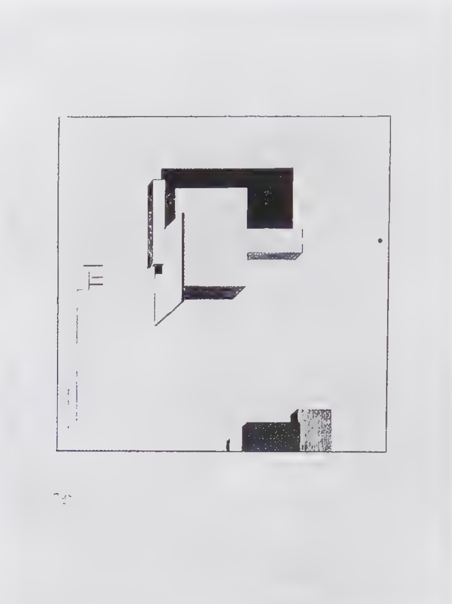
> Old art created pictures to adorn the rooms in which one could gaze upon them undisturbed. These pictures represent the psychology of the savouring bourgeois. The new art was forced through its choice of material (steel, plaster, glass, etc.) to adopt an equally mechanical technique, similar to industrial technique. The new art does not create pictures, but rather objects, material objects. It emerges from the psychology of the active worker, the proletarian.[39]

Ideas of the kind central to the distracted, productive expert of the Artwork essay were clearly quite current already in the 1920s among the group of artists to whom Benjamin was drawn during a period of intellectual crisis and reorientation. And though these ideas represent but one aspect of Benjamin's rich and changing reflections on photography and on the relation of image to text, one thing is clear: even if the nature of the mechanised image in modernity was still in 1935 open to debate and intervention, the premise of a relation between class, attention, labour and vision could be taken over ready-made.

Excursus I: Architecture, Photography and the Avant-Garde

Why does architecture figure so prominently in a description of the mode of reception of photographic and filmic images? Perhaps because the image, the book and the building had fused into a particularly productive constellation for the Berlin avant-garde, a constellation captured in El Lissitzky's expression 'book-space'.

Lissitzky's artistic explorations of what he called 'imaginary space' in the early 1920s were well known through his activity in large exhibitions and widely circulated texts.[40] They can be characterised as experiments in the 'non-optical', his concern being to criticise the traditional monumental and pictorial artwork of the museum by developing images that would represent not a particular, plausibly phenomenal view from a given position but instead other, speculative positionalities in space and time.[41] By loosening the artwork from its function of imposing a fixed view, Lissitzky asserted the potential of a new, positive, active and not contemplative relation to the image, precisely the kind of relation that had to be addressed in the realm of printed communication. His *Prouns*, for example, could be rotated, the viewer determining his or her own position instead of being frozen into a particular position before the object.



El Lissitzky, *Proun 1C*, lithograph from the *First Proun Portfolio*, 1921, © DACS 2005.

Or they might show simultaneous views, depending on their manipulation by the viewer, creating a diagram of experience unfolding over space and time rather than a single view of an object or space. Lissitzky's lithographic rendering of his 'Proun Room' of 1923, for example, folds the left wall back from the one parallel to the picture plane to allow it to be presented as it would be seen from the middle of the room. Similarly, the wall through which the viewer enters the space appears contiguous to the left wall but separated from the right wall, to which it is in fact also joined, the page thus representing the various views of the walls from the position of a rotating or walking, and hence active, viewer.[42] His photomontage of the *Abstract Cabinet* of 1927 in Hannover similarly allows the floor to change its up/down value depending on which view – 'A' or 'B' – the viewer chooses.[43] Furthermore, the *Prouns* deploy a set of conventions borrowed from technical or architectural drawings. Instead of a perspective view of receding orthogonals, the *Prouns* show their imaginary objects by means of descriptive geometry or geometric projection, in which lines parallel in space remain so in rendering. The rejection of perspective creates spatial riddles, sets of lines that can be read as receding into infinity or projecting out toward the viewer. This 'radical reversibility'[44] creates a confusion of the visual field that undermines familiar codes of representation and the experiences that they presuppose. By providing neither the object nor the viewer a fixed position in space, they raise the utopian possibility of an escape

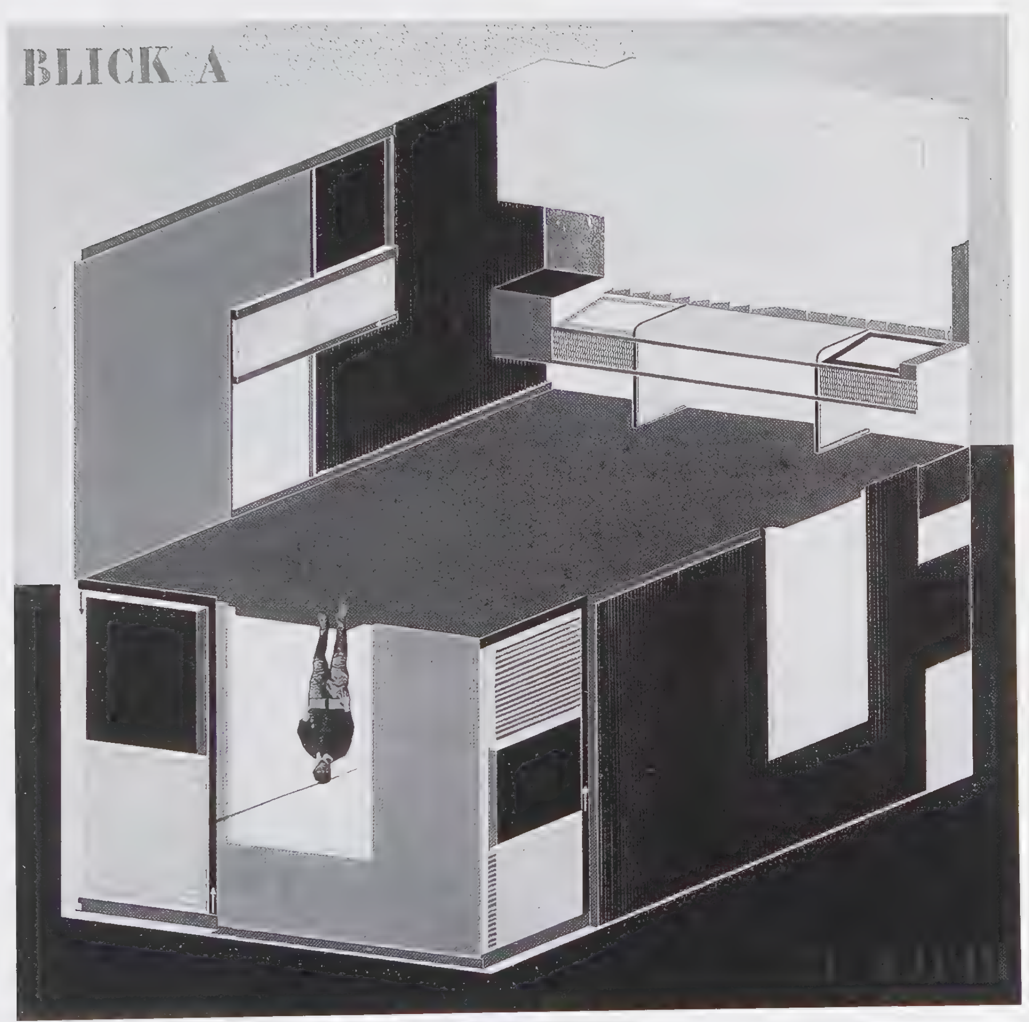
El Lissitzky, isometric drawing of the *Proun Space*, lithograph from the first Kestner Portfolio, 1923, © DACS 2005

from (ideological) conceptions of these relations. In his text 'Art and Pangeometry' in the *Europa-Almanach* of 1925, Lissitzky invokes recent developments in mathematics, writing that 'Euclidean space represents only one case among an infinite number of other spaces';[45] the unfulfilled task of the artist was to find ways of representing such spaces. Foreshadowing Benjamin's own words from *One-Way Street*, and rehearsing Moholy's position, he writes that '[t]he only significant achievements in this direction have been made by modern dynamic advertising'.[46] His own attempts to do so – the *Prouns* – have been described as 'abstract models of radical freedom'.[47]

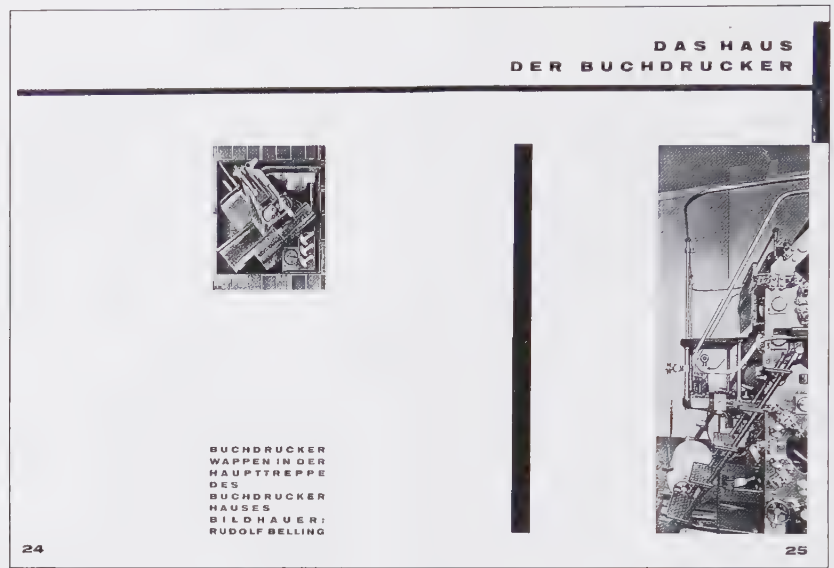
Lissitzky's theoretical exploration of the non-optical potential of images, the project of disrupting the fixed point of view, would have informed Benjamin's sense of the revolutionary potential of distraction as well as the importance of seeing while active, of using a work, of moving through it, all conditions that correspond to the experience of architecture. And other work from the Berlin circle would have made the same point without lapsing, as Lissitzky inevitably does, into popular mathematics and amateur philosophy.[48] Consider in this light the book *Max Taut: Bauten und Pläne*, designed by Johannes Molzahn, with a short text by Adolf Behne, a friend of Lissitzky and architectural critic of the Berlin avant-garde whose major books of the 1920s Benjamin read with care.[49] It is a remarkable work which thematises the relation between architectural and book-space in complex ways, anticipating Benjamin's notion of

photography as corresponding to the tactile vision of a polytechnically trained expert. The book, consisting mainly of photographs and plans, is about buildings, and about one building in particular, Max Taut's *German Printers' Union Building*. It is, in other words, a book about a book's own site of production and about the use of the printed page in the construction of buildings. On the title page of Behne's essay, the circular cut-out of the highly placed image turns the photograph into a telescopic view over the surrounding wall, showing how the text will bring the reader into the building, or perhaps, to use the ballistic imagery of the Artwork essay, into a view through a telescopic sight. The black bar on the lower right edge anchors the text, but it also opens a space or void that asks that a finger be put there to turn the page, much like the thumb-tabs of Lissitzky's *For the Voice*. The book prompts the reader to open it up, just as the building itself opens up inside, its plans laying bare the *Buchdruckerhaus* to its skeleton and the photographs dissecting it into multiple views from deep inside the body of the building. A parallel between the structure of the building and of the book is evident on page 27, where the black bar on the left side and the lines cantilevered out from it are parallel to the structural elements of the construction, the horizontal lines supporting the text they underscore just as the floors support the machines. Even the points of the steel joists seen in cross section echo in rhythm the pause of the colons and the extreme spacing of the majuscule block sans-serif letters. Page 35 shows needlessly repetitive views but by so doing suggests the movement of an observer through the building. Yet the forward-then-backward movement here denies the usual linear or narrative progression of a book, a discontinuity shown on other pages by the simultaneous presence of a plan, which shows the synchronic possibilities of movement at any time, and images referring to particular movements within. The book not only learns the lessons of architectural space but opens the building, letting its readers see simultaneously its pen-and-paper origins and its appearance in use, allowing them to move backwards and forwards in time. It also allows them to see simultaneously views requiring very different positions as well as views, such as plans, that correspond to no actual point in space. And with the text torn from the horizontal of the epic voice, the book frames its contents as documents to be used – turned around, perhaps, as its plans suggest, by an expert such as an architect or engineer, one whose own position will not be determined by the book before him.

In the Artwork essay, *One-Way Street*'s constructivist book-space, its coordinates no longer determined by dream, comes into its own enough to be easily recognised as such. In a famous analogy, Benjamin compares the painter with the magician, and the motion picture cameraman with the surgeon. The former maintain a distance from reality, bridging it by a sort of magic; the latter



El Lissitzky, axonometric drawing of the *Abstract Cabinet* for the Provinzialmuseum, Hannover, 1927, gouache and collage. Sprengel Museum, Hannover. Reproduced by permission, © DACS 2005.



Johannes Molzahn, typography and book design, pp. 26–27 from *Max Taut: Bauten und Pläne* (Berlin and Leipzig, 1927).

penetrate 'deeply into its web'.[50] His description applies perfectly to a book of the Behne/Molzahn type: the picture of the painter is a 'total one', while that of the cameraman, due to the 'thoroughgoing permeation of reality with mechanical equipment', 'consists of multiple fragments which are assembled under a new law'.[51] The new photographic book-space opens up

> an immense and unexpected field of action. Our taverns and our metropolitan streets, our offices and furnished rooms, our railroad stations and our factories appeared to have locked us up hopelessly. Then came the film and burst this prison-world asunder by the dynamite of the tenth of a second, so that now, in the midst of its far-flung ruins and debris, we calmly and adventurously go traveling. With the close up, space expands; with slow motion, movement is extended. The enlargement of a snapshot does not simply render more precise what in any case was visible, though unclear: it reveals entirely new structural formations[52]

Behne and Molzahn's book presents one such field of action; like film, photography and architecture, it turns vision into 'a process in which no one single viewpoint can be assigned to a spectator', as Benjamin writes.[53] The new book, as much filing cabinet or archive as traditional tome, suggested a reconfiguration of space and time; it represented one organisation of newly mobile and reproducible images, one organisation of the new status of document that could

Johannes Molzahn, typography and book design, pp. 34–35 from *Max Taut: Bauten und Pläne* (Berlin and Leipzig, 1927).

be worked out across the concrete model of the built object. In the avant-garde's exploration of the interaction between architecture, photography and typography, we see one (perhaps mundane) example of the new relation to images that was active and not passive, discovered in use and not by contemplation, one that could be defined as 'distracted' in a *positive* way. It answered to Benjamin's demands for 'tactile reception . . . accomplished not so much by attention as by habit'.[54] It is a mode of presentation that parallels and interweaves with a cognitive and visual entry into objects, a simultaneity of multiple views irreducible to one particular optical experience of the traditional kind. Mundane, to be sure, but the avant-garde book of the New Typographers held out the promise of a new, interventionist approach to the three dimensions of urban space, a radical interpenetrability that parallels the radical reversibility of Lissitzky's *Prouns*. The New Typographers, in other words, reveal the need for what we could call, in the context of the avant-garde, a 'pangeometric' reading of the Artwork essay.[55]

Finally, Benjamin's French connections too would have given him reason to think about architecture as a model through which a new form of vision could be worked out. Paul Valéry, whose work Benjamin discovered in the period of *One-Way Street*'s drafting, wrote a book on architecture that Benjamin praised.[56] Valéry also made the connection between the avant-garde in architecture and book design. In 'Les Deux Vertus d'un livre' of 1926, he wrote of

the book as a '*machine à lire*', a clear reference to Le Corbusier's repeated invocations of the house as a '*machine à habiter*' in *Vers une Architecture* of 1923.[57] He also distinguishes between the sequential reading of a book (which he calls 'le texte lu') and the simultaneous experience of an entire page or spread ('le texte vu') in a way that makes good on the promise of his allusion:

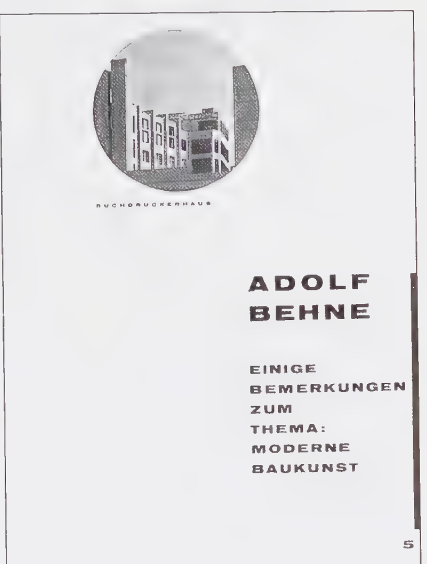
> In addition to, and separate from, reading proper, there is, and always is, the total ensemble of everything in writing. A page is an image. It offers a total impression, presents a block of text, or a system of blocks and layers, of blacks and whites, a more or less successful field of figures and intensities. This second *mode of vision* (*manière de voir*), no longer successive, linear and progressive as in reading but rather immediate and simultaneous, brings about a rapprochement between typography and architecture, as reading immediately evokes musical melody and all the arts that are moulded in time.[58]

The theory of distraction sketched out in the Artwork essay represents, among other things, the extrapolation of the book as *machine à lire* to the multiple techniques of the *machine à voir*.[59]

Excursus II: Architecture, Photography and the Baroque

Distraction is a hypothetical mode of visual attention, one described as routine, active and not absorbed, one representing a mode of technical problem-solving and not aesthetic enjoyment, one addressing bits and pieces from the inside and not unified wholes from a distance. But the invocation of architecture in the Artwork essay's discussion of distraction reception still does not strike me as self-evident, and it is worthwhile to mention another set of coordinates for the discussion of a new form of cognition based on the fragmentation of the visual field. These coordinates are as much historical as contemporary; they concern Benjamin's analysis of allegory in his failed *Habilitation*, the *Origin of the German Tragic Drama*, and how this book, published in the same year as *One-Way Street*, was received within another discourse of the visual, the academic history of art.

The argument of Benjamin's book on baroque drama is predicated upon the overturning of a traditional aesthetic prejudice. Following the lead of Alois Riegl's *Late Roman Art Industry*, Benjamin seeks to reconsider a body of work – here literary work – long considered inferior and interpreted as evidence of decline. Benjamin identifies a set of aesthetic criteria valid on their own terms as a sort of *Kunstwollen* or 'artistic volition' that can explain the seeming



ADOLF
BEHNE

EINIGE
BEMERKUNGEN
ZUM
THEMA:
MODERNE
BAUKUNST

5

Johannes Molzahn, typography and book design, p. 5 from *Max Taut: Bauten und Pläne* (Berlin and Leipzig, 1927).

mannerisms and discontinuities of this work in terms of positive principles. He contrasts the traditional literary use of classical symbol with a new sense of baroque allegory. In the wake of the romantics, the symbol was seen to connect the particular with the universal, allowing the world of man to be conceived in terms of its relation to a harmonious totality; it was a lens through which to see a world of universals. Underwriting the symbolic work of art was a belief in the wholeness of the world and the accessibility of truth or meaning through its elements. For Benjamin, allegory is the aesthetic mode that appears when this belief in a necessary relation of particulars to a universal has broken down – at times of crisis, when history seems no longer meaningful but merely a chronicle of decay, when the world seems shattered, its elements not part of a greater whole but merely isolated fragments of a meaningless existence. Baroque drama's preferred subjects are death, defeat, decay and ruins; behind its pomp and mannerisms is a world devoid of logic and significance. 'The false appearance of totality,' writes Benjamin, 'is extinguished.'[60]

Now the congruencies between the withering of a false totality and the withering of the aura, between a baroque world in which the sense of universal meaning has decayed and the non-total, piecemeal visual world of photography and film, are clear enough. The formulations, in fact, run quite parallel. If film 'bursts asunder' the world so that its image 'consists of multiple fragments which are assembled under a new law', then in allegory 'language is shattered in order to reveal in its fragments an altered and intensified expression.'[61] Alle-

gory is the term that seems to accompany many discussions of what Benjamin would describe as the non-auratic work of art.[62] What is worth noting, however, is that when the *Origin of German Trauerspiel* entered into the academic literature, it did so not in the context of literature but in an art-historical dissertation, and one specifically on architectural drawing.

The dissertation was written by Carl Linfert, a student of A. E. Brinckmann at the University of Cologne, on 'The Fundamentals of Architectural Drawing'.[63] It was published in 1931 in the first volume of an important but short-lived journal, *Kunstwissenschaftliche Forschungen*. Linfert found Benjamin's discussion of allegory in *Origin of German Trauerspiel* illuminating, and cited it several times. He also sent Benjamin a copy, instigating a courteous exchange of letters (Benjamin also reviewed the volume for the *Frankfurter Zeitung*).

Linfert invokes Benjamin's book to characterise the problems of the baroque with the objective view of a totality,[64] the period's allegorical interest in decay,[65] and its rejection of the image of the natural world.[66] But it is Linfert's discussion of the fraught relation between the view of a building and its rendering that might well have caught Benjamin's attention. And Linfert's terms would have been familiar to Benjamin from the avant-garde conception of geometric abstraction: the non-optical nature of architectural renderings based on plans or forms of projection instead of perspective. Linfert seeks to identify a particular 'architectural vision' (*Architeckturanschauung*), one that he describes as caught between the conventions of the picture and that of the technical drawing. The architectural rendering in plan and elevation is 'fully objectivistic, without any consideration of a particular standpoint.'[67] Even views that evoke the appearance of a building are, of necessity, non-optical:

> All rigorous *pictorial* forms of representation [*Bildvorstellungen*] of the kind that are familiar from painting and used to order the representation, do not apply or are transformed according to an exclusively architectural meaning. This applies in particular to the painterly representation of space and perspective. Here there are often deviations from radical linear perspectival construction with its mathematically produced orthogonals, or, in other words, from a unified *view* [*Anblick*] that is in all cases of painting the precondition of any composition.[68]

Linfert goes on to stress the non-optical nature of all drawings based on this 'architectural vision' in a way that both echoes Benjamin's discussion of allegory and foreshadows his analysis of photography:

> The characteristics of all truly architectural drawings emerge clearly from precisely the absence of a 'view' . . . namely the objective measure of forms

> and the fragmentation of all sense of context [*die Zerstückung jedes Zusammenhangs*] that comprise the 'view'. Every architectural element is rendered . . . without indication of the distance from the viewer (elevation); any other use of the picture plane is for the isolated indication of details of form (e.g. their plasticity). In architectural composition and drawing, what is decisive is a visual rendition, but one that is independent of any 'view' that is fixed by the viewer and the viewing position. The constant in architectural drawing is not the fixed point of view but rather a visual circling around the building.[69]

For Linfert, as for Lissitzky, there are two kinds of truth: the purely optical or pictorial accessibility of a totality, one that is predicated on and determined by a particular point of view to which it refers; and a constructive reordering of views into a totality independent of the viewing subject, what Benjamin referred to as photography's ability to reassemble fragments 'under a different law'.

These terms – truth to viewing subject versus truth to the viewed object – are truisms of any discussion of technical drawing. What is interesting, in light of the Artwork essay, is Linfert's characterisation not only of the methods of drawing but of the nature of the architecture itself. Architecture's character is fundamentally 'tectonic and non-pictorial [*unbildlich*]':[70] 'Architectural space requires more than an eye to be grasped in its *totality*', he writes. 'Instead of *seeing*, the eye must *feel its way through* [*durchspüren*] structures.'[71]

The visual mode by which architectural works could be grasped and represented is precisely that described by Benjamin as 'distraction'. It is a mode of vision that is non-pictorial; it achieves any possible total view by assembling images that cannot all be seen simultaneously; it is based on the technical, optical and tactile interpenetration of the object. Of course, the relation between the baroque mode of allegory, the kind of knowledge and representation appropriate to a fragmented world, and that of modernity (be it Baudelaire's Paris or the world of technically reproducible images) can be seen to be an internal matter in Benjamin's work. My point, however, is that it seems to have been Carl Linfert who identified this paradigm of this vision as not only found in, but fundamental to, architecture, Benjamin's example of the expert's *modus operandi*. Benjamin would no doubt have related the ruined world of baroque allegory with the optimistic avant-garde of constructivism (and not merely that of expressionism[72]) without Carl Linfert's use of the *Origin of German Trauerspiel*, but it is less clear that he would have related it so closely to architecutre, making the built structure so central to his argument in the Artwork essay. In any case, by 1931 Linfert had understood the relation between the melancholy optic of the baroque and the modern possibilities of vision offered by the work of architecture, a relation central to Benjamin's

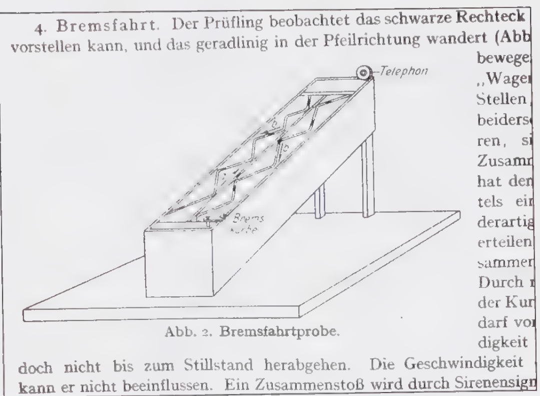
attempt, in 1935, to explore the positive potential of a fragmented, distracted vision.

Sight for Sore Eyes

In notes for the Artwork essay, Benjamin wrote that '[d]istraction and catharsis need to be described as physiological phenomena'.[73] Considering the importance of the notion of 'distraction' in his argument, it is odd that he did not try harder to make his sense of this experience a bit more precise. Others at the time, however, did, and not surprisingly, they addressed precisely what Tschichold calls 'the psychology of the active worker'. These were the real 'experts' when it came to problems of visual attention. What is worthy of note is that these experts had some important connections to the New Typographers.

For László Moholy-Nagy was not alone in the 1920s in seeing the railroad as a key site at which human perception combined with the moving machine in an exemplary way. The German railroads and local mass-transit authorities were the chief clients of a new field of experimental or applied psychology that called itself 'psychotechnics'. The field represented the convergence of laboratory psychology and business management and sought to explore 'the extent to which (industrial or commercial) work is conditioned by the psychic and physical characteristics and states of the worker'.[74] Psychotechnicians offered the results of their research to industry, which sought to optimise equipment and work practices as well as to test potential employees for specific aptitudes and capacities. Psychotechnics was an important part of the rationalising tendencies for which Weimar is so well known, a native form which overlapped with Taylorism but had a prehistory in Germany and was in the end far more significant there.[75]

A look at a typical article on the psychology of railroad work from one of several psychotechnical journals to emerge in the early years of the Weimar Republic reveals a set of concepts and concerns familiar to a reader of Moholy's work. The author's starting point is that 'in contrast to the craftsman or factory worker . . . the work of the signalman is mostly carried out in motion'.[76] Potential signalmen were therefore tested for 'general intelligence', 'the ability to note place names, numbers, and spatial forms', 'ability to divide attention in connection with urgent tasks', and 'ability to adjust to differences in illumination and to see stereoscopically'.[77] The means by which these capacities were tested look like games from an amusement park, another stop on Moholy's film itinerary of adventures for the eye.[78]


4. Bremsfahrt. Der Prüfling beobachtet das schwarze Rechteck
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Brake test. From *Industrielle Psychotechnik* 1: 5/6, 1924.

Psychotechnics also studied the relation of vision to text. Like the urban dweller capturing information as he moved through the streets, railway signalmen needed to read indistinct marks on trains rolling by in order to send them onto the right tracks. To check for this aptitude, the railroads subjected potential workers to high-speed tests using a so-called 'tachistoscope' that showed only parts of city names, many of which were intentionally similar. The psychotechnicians' test was more rigorous, if less visually exciting, than the typographers' experiments, and eyes that did not adapt to the conditions were denied employment. The stakes were higher here too, as a missed word did not simply divert or short-circuit a flow of information and send a customer, perhaps, into the wrong store or a cul-de-sac. If sent rolling onto the wrong track, a wayward train would not only clog a system of commerce but could cause considerable loss of property and perhaps human life. The fragmented and displaced word also appears in 'Dynamic of the Metropolis', vanishing and reappearing in flashing lightbulbs as one emerges from five seconds of darkness in a tunnel. One then speeds away on a roller coaster.

But since the work of the constructivist artists was oriented towards the vision encountered in the commercial sphere, it was the psychotechnicians' exploration of attention in the realm of advertising that turned out to be of most interest to the New Typographers. Journals of applied psychology regularly contained articles on advertising, and books on the same topic streamed from the psychotechnical institutes and laboratories in the 1920s; a lengthy chapter on 'attention' served often as the core of such books.[79] The appeal of experimental psychology's scientific status at, for example, the Bauhaus, is clear. An advertisement of 1926 for the Bauhaus Dessau Department of Printing and Advertising states that 'the effectiveness of advertising products is based on the psychological affect of artistic form', while Moholy wrote in 1923 that '[t]he printed image corresponds with its contents through *its own* optical and

psychological laws'.[80] Psychotechnics seemed able to provide precisely those laws, precisely this expertise.

From the arrival of Moholy at the Bauhaus, psychotechnics and the New Typography were well aware of the convergence of their interests, and each saw in the other a potential ally. Moholy and the Stuttgart psychotechnician Fritz Giese were particularly close, and each, perhaps at the urging of his counterpart, dabbled in the other's field. In 1925, the year in which *Painting, Photography, Film* appeared, Giese published a famous book on the so-called 'Girls', the spectacularly popular dancing troops trained with military precision of which the Tiller Girls were the most famous.[81] Moholy too gives them a prominent place in his film.[82] Giese's book contains long, ecstatic passages on the rhythm and tempo of the metropolis that echo the leitmotif of nearly every spread from the Bauhaus book. Indeed, both were working in a contemporary genre that cut across media in the attempt to represent urban modernity through the complex interplay of body, machine and movement, a genre that included Walter Ruttmann's film *Berlin: The Symphony of the Metropolis* of 1927 as well as several important feuilleton articles by Siegfried Kracauer.[83] The psychotechnician and the New Typographer exchanged professional courtesies, Giese providing advertising copy for the promotion of Moholy's book, and Moholy writing an entry on the Bauhaus for Giese's *Handwörterbuch der Arbeitswissenschaft* a few years later.[84] By 1928, advertising psychology and psychotechnics appeared on the Bauhaus curriculum.[85] Even after Moholy's departure, psychotechnics remained on the curriculum and, if anything, increased in importance. From 1929 Bauhaus members would have been apprised of the latest developments in the field by the Dresden psychotechnician Hanns (Johannes) Riedel, who regularly lectured at the school.[86] Students were taught the principles of the field, and some of their notes from his classes survive.[87]

The psychologists of the laboratories and the typographers of the avant-garde met on the common ground of visual attention as an object of knowledge. Both groups investigated the nature of colours, explored the laws of contrast and measured the differing amounts of attention granted to various parts of the visual field.[88] They were interested in sharing the results of their experiments. And yet the obvious incompatibility of the hard edges of constructivist geometry and the beckoning smile and soft curves recommended by the psychotechnicians for the mass-market advertisement, the clash of *Sachlichkeit* and the saccharine, makes it clear that we need to attend to divergences rather than take at face value the protagonists' own word on the importance of this alliance of artistic and laboratory expertise.

'Every age,' wrote Moholy, 'has its own optical orientation. Our age: that of the film, the illuminated advertisement, the simultaneity of sensorily percepti-

esem Apparat 20 Einzel-
: ergibt dann die Bewer-
ıftenmal wird zur Bewer-

Abb. 4. Tachistoskop.

Abb. 3. Reaktions-
schnelligkeitsprüfer.

ıchte Zeit und die Anzahl der Fehler ergibt ein

Optical devices, including a tachistoscope (upper left). From *Industrielle Psychotechnik* 1: 9, 1924.

ble events.'[89] There is a deep crudeness to this statement, first in the assumption that the rushing eye belongs to the consumer, and second, in the fetishising conception of the advert as simple optical 'event'. But here I want to bracket out this major theoretical lacuna – not considering the relation of visual form to commodity form – and concentrate at first on the issue of attention in its purely physiological aspect.

For Moholy, man is 'the synthesis of all his functional apparatuses, i.e. man will be most perfect . . . if the functional apparatuses of which he is composed . . . are trained to the limit of their capacity. Art . . . performs such a training'.[90] Here Moholy's analysis shows why he and his colleagues might have sought inspiration in contemporary psychotechnics (with the exception of the statement that it is *art* that performs such training). However Moholy continues in a vein that reveals the limits of this interest: 'It is a specifically human characteristic that man's functional apparatuses can never be saturated; they crave ever new impressions following each new reception'.[91] But psychotechnics was,

in fact, concerned with precisely those human 'functional apparatuses' that *were* saturated: vision that was tired, attention that could no longer focus, minds that no longer registered like machines but wandered, switched off, turned in on themselves, that retreated. When psychotechnics looked at attention, it was always, in one way or another, confronting the problem of *fatigue*.

Psychotechnics put the eye to tests that boggle the mind, subjecting it to machines to find its limits. And the major concern was the tendency of the eye to tire. In the journal *Industrielle Psychotechnik*, we read that most jobs are dependent not on particular muscles or movements (the basic assumption of Taylorist lines of thought) but rather on the regulatory activity of the sense organs, and in particular the eye, 'whose blunting in terms of the reception of stimuli and their transmission is a fundamental factor for performance in general'.[92] The performance of tired eyes did not justify the capital investment in machine and labour time; it paid to rest them. Yet over time the eye recovered more slowly and less completely. The precise effect of time and labour on the eye needed to be figured into the calculus of labour – 'on the one hand,' wrote the author of an article on eye fatigue, 'to protect the eye; on the other hand to achieve higher performance.'[93] And the eye/brain nexus had its own limits, for at the end of a day, the two did not always focus in unison, if at all. Attention was tested by multimedia laboratory events involving the simultaneous registration and processing of information delivered by every conceivable means.

Through advertising, psychotechnics went beyond the office, the factory, the place of work. Studies of the commercial uses of applied psychology presupposed the tired eye and the wandering, unfocused mind. Here, however, the idea was not to find the point at which fatigue triumphed over will in production, but to stimulate a will through fatigued sensory capacities in the circulation sphere. 'The goal of the advertisement,' we read in a dissertation on neon advertising one Friedrich Wilhelm Hartwig submitted to the faculty of the Psychotechnical Institute at the University of Würzburg, 'is to be looked at.'

> Put crassly . . . only the advertising measures which employ the strongest stimulation will work. . . . [O]ne can certainly call this particular sensation of the registration of stimuli 'attention.' To this . . . one can oppose 'distraction' [*Zerstreutheit*]. The typical example of this is the absent-minded professor, whose attention is directed to other things and who is therefore 'distracted' from everyday matters. . . . Attention is the basis of every act of the will; and the advertisement seeks to trigger such an act of will.[94]

As aggressive as this approach sounds, the world of commerce and the printed media was at a somewhat safe remove from some of the torture we have discussed. '[I]llustrated books, newspapers, magazines are printed – in millions.

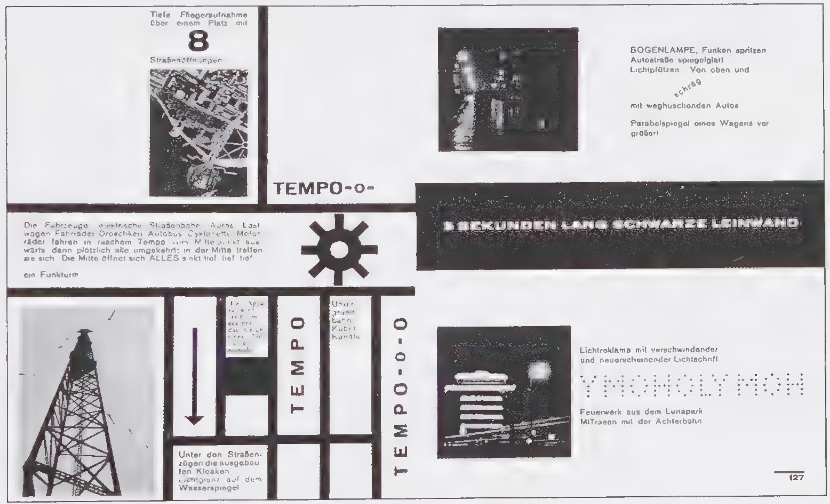
hstaben ausgefallen, also etwa:

1 2 3 4

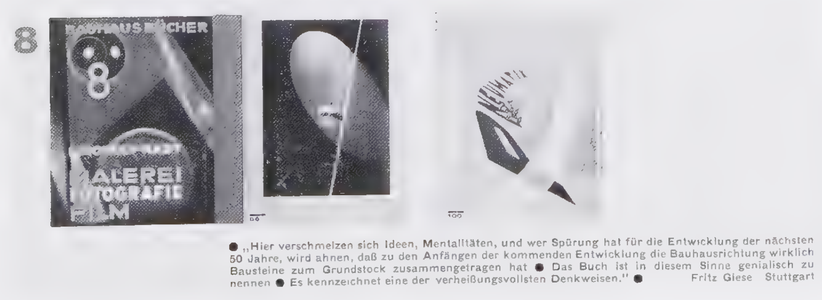
Von Berl▬ über ▬sden, Mün▬ nach Dü▬dorf.

eführten Städte sind neben einer Anzahl ähnlich lautender in

Completion test. From *Industrielle Psychotechnik* 1: 5/6, 1924.



From László Moholy-Nagy, 'Dynamik der Großstadt', *Malerei, Fotografie, Film*, second edition (Munich, 1928).



From László Moholy-Nagy, *14 Bauhausbücher*, prospectus for Bauhaus books, 1929. Photograph courtesy Bauhaus-Archiv, Berlin.

Abb. 12. Rahma-Margarine.

Abb. 13. Sarotti.

From *Industrielle Psychotechnik* II: 11, 1925.

The unambiguousness of the real, the truth in the everyday situation is there for all classes. *The hygiene of the optical, the health of the visible is slowly filtering through,*' wrote Moholy in *Painting, Photography, Film.*[95] Yet there is one clear indication of a downside to this change and progress in perception in 'Dynamic of the Metropolis': 'A watchman salutes. Glazed eyes. Close-up: an eye.'[96] Moholy illustrates the fatigue of the night watchman by two concentric circles, making it a matter of mere geometry. For the psychotechnicians, however, as Moholy might have known, it was something to be tested by equipment that would isolate the required perceptions and measure the reactions, allowing performance to be converted into numerical values.

For the New Typographers, the eye was strangely separated from the body, not subject to its demands and resistances. That very body was the subject of psychotechnical experiment, yet they ignored it. Psychotechnics was unavoidable but avoided; when the body appeared it did so like the watchman's perfectly geometric but glazed eye, no longer seeing; it appeared as the bad conscience of the avant-garde. For the embodied eye made clear a situation that the avant-garde was unwilling or unable to explore, showing that visual form was subject to the system of commodity production and circulation, a system prone to the wear and tear of the subjects who were its agents. The project of psychotechnics was the analysis of this subject, the human in the capitalist machine: it studied how to guide the subject as consumer, by irritation or seduction communicating with those too tired to care; when it came to the subject as labour power, psychotechnics sought to calculate the sight of sore eyes. In other words, the insertion of the eye into the machine cannot be said to have produced any sort of socialist 'optical hygiene', and the New Typographers' points of contact with the experts of attention suggest that they were, at some level, perfectly aware of this.

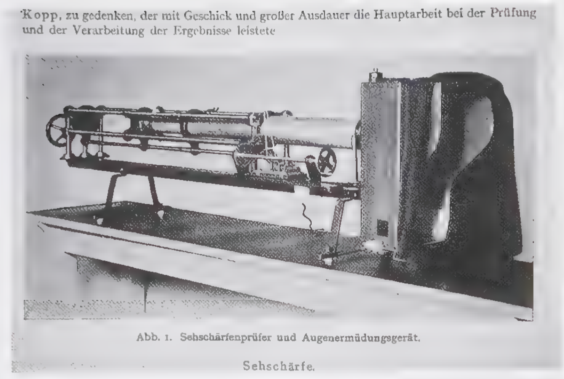

Kopp, zu gedenken, der mit Geschick und großer Ausdauer die Hauptarbeit bei der Prüfung und der Verarbeitung der Ergebnisse leistete

Abb. 1. Sehschärfenprüfer und Augenermüdungsgerät.

Sehschärfe.

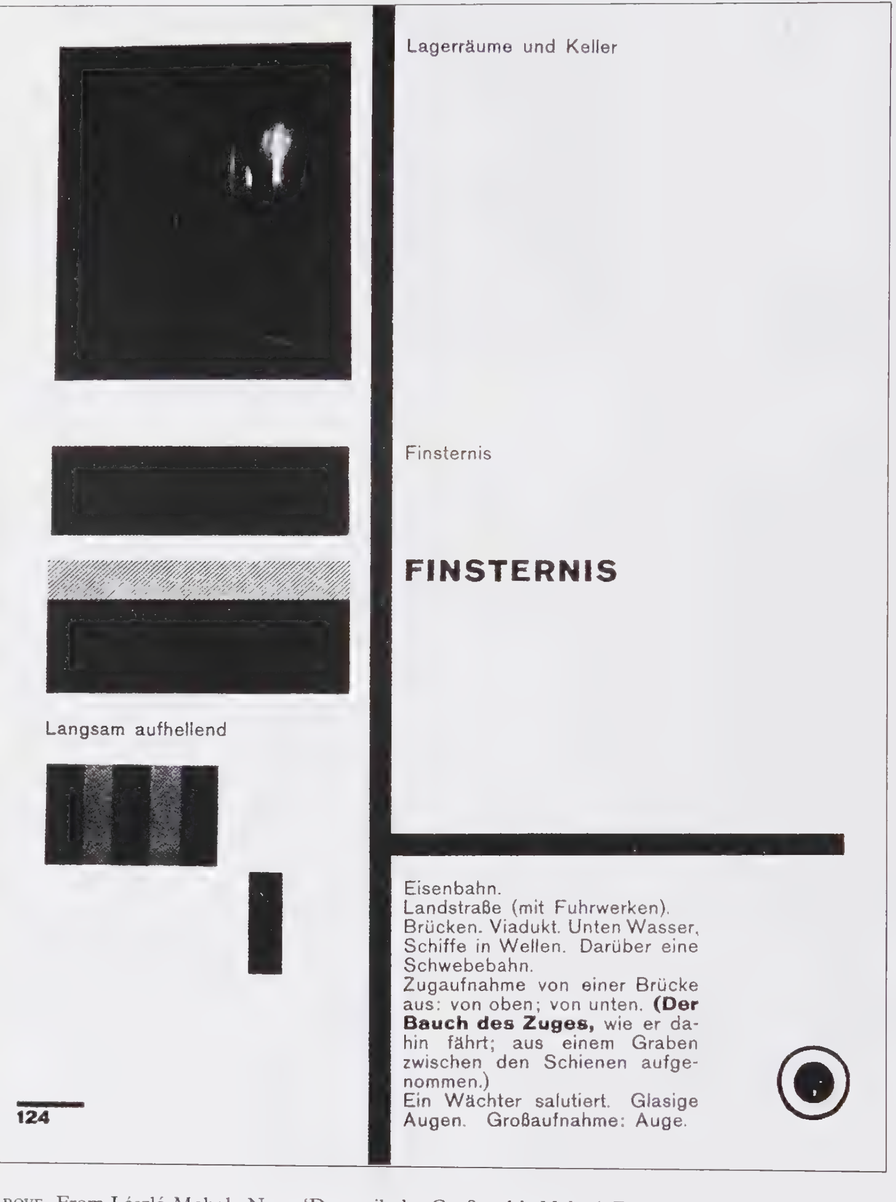
Apparatus for testing visual acuity and fatigue. From *Industrielle Psychotechnik* II: 5, 1925.

Distraction

The psychotechnicians, the New Typographers and Benjamin all converge in their interest in the nature of visual attention under modern conditions of motion, mechanics and textuality. Yet the way they define these physical and cognitive states varies considerably, despite all overlap in terminology ('concentration', 'distraction' and so on). The states they describe were so new, or emerging in such different contexts, that the concepts used to represent them were extremely unstable. The obviously different notions of distraction that emerge can, perhaps, allow us to put Benjamin's use of the concept to the test, but first we need to pin down exactly what was meant by this and other terms depending on the discourses from which they emerged.

Benjamin defines distraction by contrasting it to the immersion of traditional aesthetic contemplation, seeing the latter as passive and the former, in its dispersal of attention, as characteristic of the cognitive state of the competent, experienced practitioner or technician. It is, in its lack of a fixed and fixing focus, 'relaxed.' Benjamin, of course, relates this not only to the performance of technical tasks but to the viewing of films.[97] His coupling of film reception and the term 'distraction' comes directly from the usual mandarin cultural criticism of the period, to which he refers.[98] But in seeing distraction as active in evading the Medusa-stare of the work of art, Benjamin reverses the valences of traditional criticism (thus the distracted mass absorbing the work of art as opposed to being absorbed and immobilised by it).

Yet in his use of the notion of 'distraction', Benjamin takes up a term that was not uncontested. He can be seen to be challenging not only elitist *Kulturkritik* but also an analysis close to him on the independent left, that of Siegfried Kracauer's important account of the social phenomenology of film



ABOVE From László Moholy-Nagy, 'Dynamik der Großstadt', *Malerei, Fotografie, Film*, second edition.

FACING PAGE, TOP Alfred Eisenstaedt, from the photo-essay 'The Night Watchmen of Today', 1931: 'A very interesting psycho-technical experiment: to check their composure, each watchman has to undergo two tests. This watchman has to grab two bars, which can be switched on and off electrically, whilst reading a book. The further down he can grab the bars, the more attentive and controlled he is.' Photograph courtesy Archive of Modern Conflict, London, reproduced by permission.

FACING PAGE, BOTTOM Stereoscopic combination of retinal images of different sized circles. From Wilhelm Wundt, *Grundzüge der physiologischen Psychologie* (Leipzig, 1874).

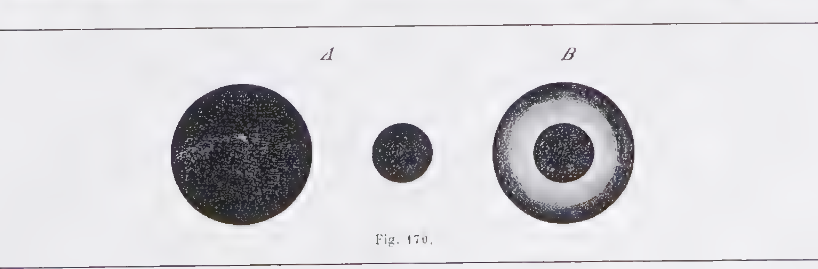


Fig. 170.

spectatorship in the essay 'Cult of Distraction' of 1926.[99] Here Kracauer accepts the usual equation of film, distraction, and mental lassitude; yet he too challenges the negative judgement of it, seeing it as a legitimate and inevitable demand, compensatory splendour for those subjected to the mechanisation of urban life and the rationalisation of industrial and commercial labour. The 'cult' of distraction is, for Kracauer, honest in its rejection of hegemonic high culture on the part of classes that do not partake of the privilege of which this culture is both sign and vehicle; in the emphasis on external effect he sees an appropriate response to a traditional privileging of inwardness whose social base had disappeared and whose function had turned reactionary. Kracauer is still, however, ambivalent. For all the legitimacy of distraction, he is at one with traditional criticism in seeing it as passive and immobilising, though his concern is not with standards of bourgeois taste. Rather it is cognitive: distraction cannot be a progressive or revolutionary force in cinema as it continues to submit a viewing subject to the uncritically unitary effect of the work of art, one representing a false totality. Benjamin argues, against Kracauer, that precisely this fragmentary truth is embodied in the distraction of production, and that film has the potential to school a form of active apprehension that can grasp this social truth at the same time as it acts upon it. If the externality of distraction and leisure serves a critical and compensatory function in Kracauer's analysis (as did the autonomous work of art for an earlier stage of the bourgeoisie), then for Benjamin the relation between production and leisure has taken a dialectical swing that makes them complementary in a different, and now positive, way.

And the psychotechnicians? They and Benjamin contrast concentration and distraction; and they are one in their view of absorption as a negative state. Yet here the similarities end, and the differences are instructive. For Benjamin, distraction was the modern state of the urban industrial and commercial assault on the senses; absorption or concentration was the rejection of this, something he sees as reactionary ('a school for asocial behavior'[100]). But in the instrumental concepts of the psychotechnician Hartwig, distraction was *equated* with absorption. Recall his example of the absent-minded professor who tuned out of the urban din and focused on his own thoughts. The subject defined as 'distracted' was the one unavailable to messages the advertiser or employer wanted him to register. For Benjamin, distraction was the ability to register stimuli, to think and to act, but for the psychologists, it was the refusal or resistance to doing so. These terms were not merely unstable; they could, in fact, turn into their opposites.

To find a common denominator, however simple or crude, it is worth citing some of the standard terms by which visual attention was discussed in

Germaine Krull, *Paris-Matinal Billboard*, 1927. New gelatin silver print by Jürgen Wilde (1992) from glass negative. Germaine Krull Nachlaß, Museum Folkwang, Essen.

Germany at the time, terms provided by the founding figure of experimental or physiological psychology, Wilhelm Wundt. Wundt describes two ways in which a stimulus can enter consciousness. The 'entrance into the large area of consciousness' he calls *perception* (*Perzeption*), while 'the elevation into the focus of attention' he calls *apperception* (*Apperzeption*). In perception, a stimulus is simply available for the focus of attention – it is above the threshold of *consciousness* and we are 'darkly' aware of it – while in the case of apperception, the will turns the focus of attention to a stimulus; we are clearly aware of it; it is above the threshold of *attention*.[101]

Kracauer's notion of distraction can be assimilated to Wundt's terms, thematising as it does the surface quality of the total stimulation of the visual field. He calls the experience of the new cinemas a '*Gesamtkunstwerk* of effects', which 'assaults all the senses using every possible means', and he describes a process of overstimulation that disturbs the possibility of apperception or controlled, voluntary attention, and more importantly for Kracauer, of independent cognition.[102] The sensory apparatus is confused by the constant bombardment and, in this description, simply gives up, unable to focus long enough on a single stimulus as a proper centre of attention, thus reducing the

LEFT 'Passengers wait for their train on the platform. A railway crew repairs track for as long as the stretch is clear.' From *Deutsche Berufskunde* (Leipzig, 1930).

FACING PAGE Aenne Biermann, *From the Moving Train*, *c.* 1930. Photograph courtesy Sammlung Ann und Jürgen Wilde, Zülpich.

registration of stimuli to an even field of undifferentiated perception: 'The interior design of movie theaters serves one sole purpose: to rivet the viewers' attention to the peripheral, so that they will not sink into the abyss. The stimulations of the senses succeed one another with such rapidity that there is no room left between them for even the slightest contemplation.'[103] The moment of volition fundamental to apperception and any form of cognition or reflection beyond this ('contemplation') is undermined. Wundt's 'perception' and Kracauer's 'distraction' are passive. Now whether this adequately describes the phenomenology of cinema spectatorship is open to question,[104] but it is at some level a convincing description of the state of end-of-day nervousness and exhaustion and one easily available means of relaxation. It also bears some resemblance to the experience that would have arisen from Moholy's film 'Dynamic of the Metropolis', with its flashing lights, dancing, rollercoaster rides and other visual excitements. But this is obviously diametrically opposed to Benjamin's sense of an active, intervening, competent and critical expert solving problems by habit, something made abundantly clear by the nearly verbatim reappearance of the psychological hallmarks of Kracauer's form of distraction in a psychotechnician's report on a locomotive driver who had been involved in a serious collision:

1. Calm: Very deficient. . . .
3. Mental endurance: Easily fatigued with intellectual effort, forgetful.

> 4. Attention: Good distribution of attention, however completely unable to register simultaneous stimuli and to move into an active mode. . . .
> 10. Tendency to be distracted [*Ablenkbarkeit*]: completely distracted by even the slightest cause.[105]

The driver was found to be at fault and unfit for service.

The responses of the dismissed driver to psychotechnical examination are reminiscent of descriptions of contemporary cinema viewers, but also recall Moholy's new vision of the metropolis as a sort of passive acceptance of stimuli without the ability or need to respond or to direct the attention to a specific focus. The view from the front of a train could be part of an expert's daily work, it could be the terror of a modern mechanised sublime, or it could become a new sort of disinterested pleasure. Watching the signals fly by with wide-open eyes and paralysed limbs could clearly be either recreation or the recipe for certain collision and catastrophe, depending on where, or where in the train, one is sitting.

And what of the Artwork essay's 'expert', the relaxed, critical viewer for whom the cinema is a school of shocks? Benjamin does not minimise the dangers:

> Film is the art form that corresponds to the intensified threat to life which modern man must look in the eye. The need to expose oneself to shock effects is man's adaptation to the dangers threatening him. Film corresponds

> to profound changes in the apparatus of apperception – changes that are experienced at a personal level by every pedestrian in big-city traffic, on an historical scale by every present-day citizen.[106]

He did, however, overestimate the ability to meet this challenge, writing that the shock-effect of film 'needs to be met, like all shock-effects, by a heightened presence of mind'.[107] A psychotechnician would have known to check for this quality using a procedure that tested both 'fright-reaction' (*Schreckverhalten*) and 'decisiveness' (*Entschlußfähigkeit*).[108] On average, seventy to eighty percent of those tested for employment as streetcar drivers failed the tests of which this was the first. Benjamin himself would have been one of them: he was also easily diverted in urban traffic.[109] Benjamin's ideas on 'habit' too would have aroused the scepticism of anyone with even minimal psychotechnical training. In his notes for the passages on the activity of the expert solving tasks of world-historical importance by active, tactile vision, he writes:

> Someone who is distracted can form habits – indeed, it is precisely he who can . . . The automobile driver whose thoughts are 'somewhere else entirely,' for example with his malfunctioning motor, will adjust to the modern form of the garage better than the art historian who can only seek to determine its style. Reception in a state of distraction, which with increasing urgency is making itself felt in all areas of art, is the symptom of a decisive functional transformation of the human apparatus of apperception, which is now confronted with tasks that can only be solved collectively.[110]

In the realm of film, we read that 'the public is an examiner, but a distracted one'.[111] The first objection of a psychotechnician would be that the reactions of a driver are never simply tactile and habitual, but must always involve consideration and judgement. In the words of the Bauhaus's Hanns Riedel,

> Various stimuli, i.e. moving objects, appear in the visual field of a [streetcar] driver. He must, without diverting his attention from a single point of focus, the track, divide these stimuli into essential and inessential stimuli, whereby the judgement of movement according to direction and velocity is relevant. To the inessential stimuli he must not react; to the essential stimuli, he can react in one of three ways:
>
> a) Ringing the bell, or ringing the bell and cutting power
> b) Normal braking
> c) Emergency braking
> A and b might be necessary simultaneously.
> It is . . . crucial that the action never be fully automatic, but always a *considered* one.[112]

Furthermore, psychologists warned against the danger of 'daydreaming' with habitual tasks.[113] The lack of focused concentration and the reliance on habit are precisely what the psychotechnicians were called in to prevent. Their literature is filled with graphic examples of the dangers of the automatic act of the hand divorced from the attentive mind. They look nothing like the sure grip of the hand that Benjamin equates with the tactile grasp of the trained eye .[114]

Now my procedure here for testing the qualities that Benjamin attributes to an active, intervening form of 'distraction' against the criteria of psychotechnics is hardly sophisticated or even fair, but it does serve to reveal a flaw in the approach of both Benjamin and the constructivists toward the new conditions of visuality about which they thought so hard, oversights that might be forgiven theorists of art but for the stress they place on the political nature of visual perception. Reduced to the simplest terms of the perceptual psychology of the day, it is the lack of a clear distinction between voluntary and involuntary perception. For Wundt and others who followed, apperception can only be maintained by the activation of the will; perception beneath the threshold of attention is passive. Psychotechnicians advising advertisers were aware of this, and described the task of the effective advert to be not simply attracting attention by forcing stimuli over the threshold, but rather the transformation of involuntary to voluntary attention.[115] Benjamin makes the involuntary attention that is the assumed state of the consumer – on the street corner, stopping absently before a shop window, leafing through an illustrated journal, in the cinema – decisive as a model for voluntary action, thinking revolution on the model of leisure activity. As a Brechtian move by which the lessons of leisure can be transformed into a critical attitude toward the social status quo, as a way of politicising aesthetics, it is far less subtle than the fascist aestheticisation of politics by a very different sort of elision between the political and consumer markets. One might argue for the consumer as expert, as one who manipulates as much as he is manipulated – and we have seen many such arguments – but Benjamin does not do so here.

'The progressive reaction', he writes, 'is characterised by the direct, intimate fusion of visual and emotional enjoyment with the orientation of the expert.'[116] If, then, the fulcrum of Benjamin's argument is the possibility of a new dialectical reciprocity between leisure and labour, he does not adequately account for the fact that the productive use of the human sensory apparatus is simply another form of hard work. Obviously, he knew this, but given the conceptual tools widely available and pressed into use all around him in the 1920s and 1930s to describe vision, work, and their social nature, his argument seems dangerously thin.[117] Benjamin makes no attempt to confront the nature of expert technical work and vision in the forms in which they actually existed at the time. We would want to know precisely what to do with another description of

Hands mutilated as a result of mechanical woodworking accidents. From *Industrielle Psychotechnik* 1: 4, 1924.

the expert, again a locomotive driver, from psychotechnics' inventory of the eye and mind at work:

> The labour of the locomotive driver, from the taking control of the locomotive to its delivery into the depot, is a single act of exhausting, unbroken attention, focussed on the perception of regular and irregular, occasionally even completely unexpected stimuli. The slightest distraction leads often to serious problems and catastrophes. The work of the locomotive driver can be reduced to three chief moments: 1) perception of the signals; 2) observation during the journey, and 3) operation of the locomotive. Typical for the attention of the driver is its division, its focus on several objects simultaneously and the permanent tension.[118]

Again, we recognise here the psychotechnics' continuing battle with the reflective mind. The eye of the expert had to *struggle* to avoid contemplation. But even if not contemplative, the expert could not be distracted at all; he had to be able to handle all that came, open to situations changing at all times, active. This is not any sort of relaxed viewer of images but rather the ideal worker, the eye without a body, the body that never tired. Benjamin does not recognise the film viewer as having an eye embedded in a body that tended to refuse and to fall into a passive state of absorption, which was subject to needs and failures that cannot so simply be considered reactionary.

The Artwork essay describes not a distracted, relaxed state but rather a permanent activation, a total mobilisation, a state of emergency of the visual field. It is one that might be part of the phenomenology of revolution, left or right, but to refer to the habitual action of the expert, the distracted critic as the

El Lissitzky, *The Constructor (Self-Portrait)*, 1924, © DACS 2005.

subject able to tackle, collectively, the problems of the 'turning points of history' seems rather off-target. It happened most probably because Benjamin's consideration of the changes of experience under modernity was prompted and guided by the avant-garde, a group that purged from its work the insights of the psychologists with whom they had contact, allowing them to transform the sophisticated instrumentalisation of the human sensory apparatus into what they called 'socialism of vision'.[119] Like the eye that Benjamin described, theirs too was undifferentiated according to its deployment in labour or leisure, and it had only a very attenuated relation to the body. The typographers knew what they were evading – recall the bad conscience shown by the tired night watch-

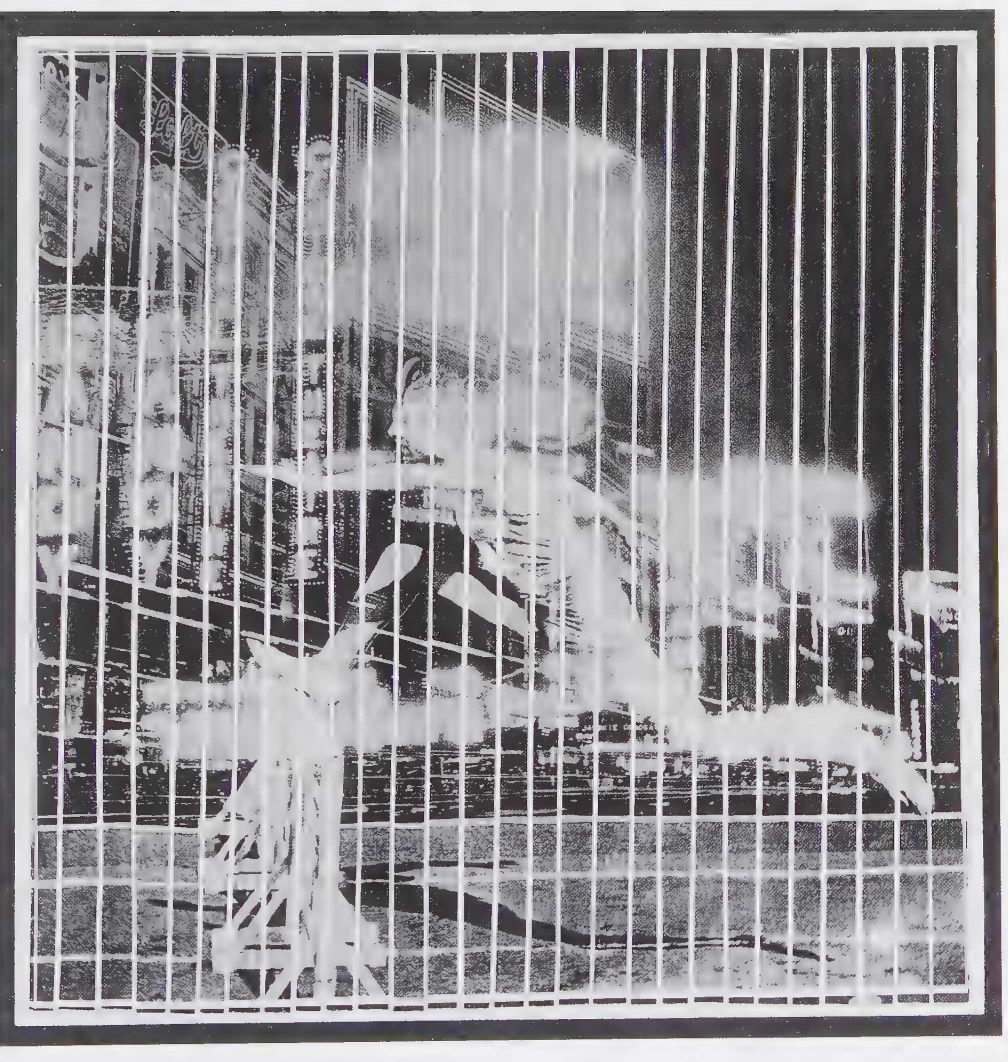
man's glazed eye – but it seems that this important body of knowledge did not enter Benjamin's field of view decisively enough to cross the threshold of attention, not enough to prompt him to strengthen the structure of one of the most important parts of his argument, to inform him in even the minimal way that it did Kracauer. The highly suspect sources of some of his thought about a socialist vision that never tired fell within a certain kind of blind spot where he could see only the New Typographers' utopian but wilfully blind analysis of visual attention.

*

Willfully blind: in the account I present here, the avant-garde has come off rather badly, and this is certainly unfair. First, the analysis of the social instrumentalisation of the seeing body was not the task they set for themselves, and there is no reason to doubt the sincerity of the political hopes they attached to their explorations. Second, the 'avant-garde' is far too heterogeneous a group to make generalisations about. The convergence of, for example, the likes of Jan Tschichold, artisinally trained as a calligrapher and sign-writer, and Moholy-Nagy, who had studied law, is a matter with its own historical specificity, tension and complexity. I accept this too, and will try, in at least a minimal way, to make amends in the following section.

But this is a less an argument about the avant-garde than about Benjamin and the Artwork essay, and it is worth noting that he did not make such distinctions either. He drew, like the artists, promiscuously from sources others considered mutually exclusive (thus his notorious disputes with Scholem and Adorno, among others). And it would be wrong to lay all the blame at the door of the constructivists. For Benjamin was hardly in the dark about psychotechnics; in fact, it assumes a surprisingly important role in the Artwork essay. He does not use the term, but in discussing the potential of film to encourage critical examination, Benjamin calls both the cameraman and the viewer 'experts', and implies that these experts are, precisely, psychotechnicians. He knew that they were the experts of that new configuration of body and mind in both labour and leisure that could be termed 'performance'. Consider his mix of sport, technology, and filmic vision from the first version of the essay, unpublished in Benjamin's lifetime:

> The production process . . . has brought with it countless tests daily in the form of the mechanized test. These tests take place out of view: whoever does not pass is removed from the production process. They also take place separately: in the institutes for occupational testing . . .



El Lissitzky, Runner in the City, 1926, collage, gelatin silver print. The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Ford Motor Company Collection, Gift of Ford Motor Company and John C. Waddell, 1987, © DACS 2005.

> As opposed to the test of sport, these tests are not adequately displayed. And this is precisely the point at which film intervenes. *Film makes test performance displayable by making the displayability of a performance a test.* The film actor performs . . . not before an audience but before an apparatus. The cameraman stands at precisely the same spot as the director of an experiment during occupational testing.[120]

In the final version, these passages remain:

> What matter in these tests are segmental performances of the individual. The film shoot and the vocational aptitude test are taken before a committee of experts.[121]

> This permits the audience to take the position of a critic. . . . The audience's identification with the actor is really an identification with the camera. Consequently the audience takes the position of the camera; its approach is that of testing.[122]

Benjamin understands that the aptitude testing of the industrial psychotechnician was not of a progressive kind. But if this testing occurs in the open, he argues, it can be turned into a positive habit of mind; the critical eye of the tester can be taken over by the critical spectator, the filmic apparatus can encourage this probing sort of appraisal. The examination is, of course, of a different kind: this expert tests physical performance; the audience should check a certain social calculus. But the rather unexpected awareness that Benjamin shows of the quantification to which the producing body was subjected shows that we need to rethink the notion of the expert.[123] For even if we take as our examples again the psychologists of the laboratory and the typographers of the avant-garde, we still know very little about them. We need to consider not a reified notion of the *content* but rather the *status* of the knowledge that could be considered 'expert'.

The Eye of the Expert

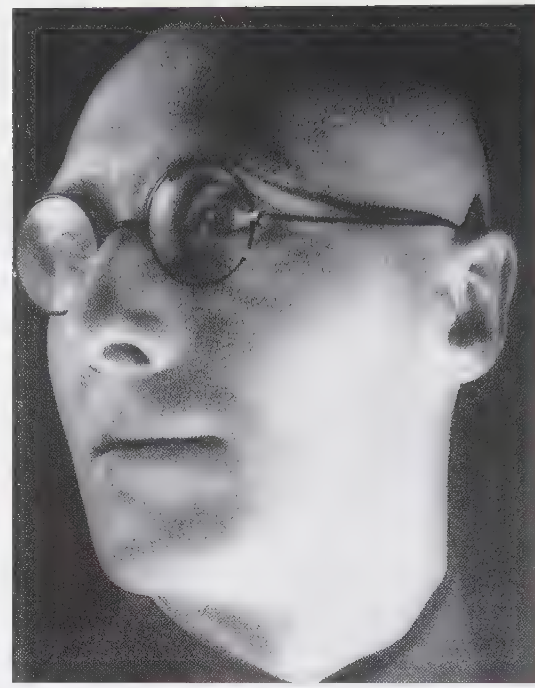
Benjamin was hardly alone in considering the 'expert' a figure as fundamental to modernity as he was problematical. And in terms of the larger critical debate, his arrival in Germany can be dated quite precisely. The expert came, appropriately enough, from the Soviet Union, and he was brought by Sergei Tretyakov in a suitcase full of lecture scripts with which he electrified the Berlin left-bourgeois literary intelligentsia in 1931.[124] In his lectures, Tretyakov introduced two notions: that of the 'operative writer' and of the 'de-professional-

isation' of literary work. The bourgeois 'author', said Tretyakov, was a parasitic social phenomenon trafficking in the outdated 'fetishes' of individuality and genius. There was no longer any justification for a writer simply commenting on life, death, or fate; what was needed was one who was a productive member of a socialist society. Traditional 'literary' work could no longer provide that sort of productive contribution. The writer must be stripped of his 'professional mystique'; he must be an operative; he must be another one of the 'technical experts' needed in the building of the Soviet Union. His literary activity is not sufficient on its own; he must operate in production in whatever capacity is demanded and allow other experts to come to voice.

But not everyone in Berlin greeted the expert, 'operative' instead of 'contemplative' and now 'polytechnically educated', with open arms. Siegfried Kracauer treated the Tretyakov phenomenon twice in his journalistic work. At first, reporting on the Tretyakov lecture in the *Frankfurter Zeitung*, he wrote that '[i]t does not pay to take such claims in earnest'.[125] He had spotted the cachet of the Soviet revolution for the bourgeois fashion it was, and he sought to defend Marxism from its simplifiers. Yet the notion of the expert would not simply disappear. Kracauer soon returned to the subject of the professional role of the artist, considering Tretyakov's ideas, now in a more positive light, through a more sophisticated version of the Soviet import as filtered through Peter Suhrkamp and the Brecht circle (of which Benjamin was a part).[126] Yet he still resisted the 'deprofessionalisation' of the intellectual, his relegation to the level of another 'expert'. In the German situation, he concluded, only a writer or intellectual in isolation could maintain any sort of critical view.

Later, at the end of 1931, Kracauer revisited the problem that Tretyakov had brought with him, distilling the issue to what he called, in the title of a very important essay, 'The Expert'. For Kracauer, the crisis of Germany, the land of 'specialists', is ultimately the result of the failure of the experts. Most writers at the time define the 'expert' in the technical way, but for Kracauer, it is the specialist in any narrowly defined area: 'From craftsman up to the economic policy expert to the scholar, the experts are unable to grasp the entire situation enough even to the extent necessary to perform their specialist duties.'[127] Expertise is bought at the price of an ability to grasp a whole. The problem is not so much the necessity of expert knowledge and specialisation, but rather the intellectual background against which this knowledge is taught, a traditional idealism which does not allow the expert to conceive a totality in concrete enough terms to understand even his *own* work in a limited area of competence. For Kracauer, the nature of modern labour had created a crisis of knowledge.

As with leisure, so with labour. In the issues of both 'distraction' and the 'expert', Benjamin and Kracauer come down on opposite sides of a debate that

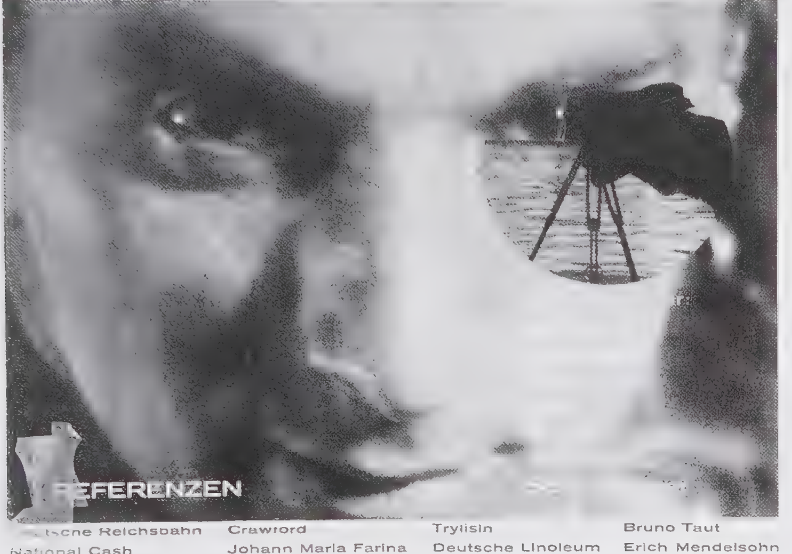


LEFT Alexander Rodchenko, *Sergei Tretyakov*, 1928. Gelatin Silver Print. Photograph courtesy Howard Schickler Fine Art, New York.

FACING PAGE 'Sasha Stone sees even more.' Advertisement in *Gebrauchsgrafik*, 1930.

they define in the very same terms. In his lecture 'The Author as Producer' of 1934, Benjamin begins the work of redeeming the notion of the expert, citing Tretyakov and reviving his idea of an operative writer by no longer demanding another, non-literary productive role for the author but encouraging instead an understanding and more flexible notion of the writer's actual social position.[128] The appearance of the expert in the Artwork essay represents another attempt to redeem this notion of the Soviet avant-garde against objections of the type made by Kracauer, and to define an expert whose mode of thought does not dangerously combine the limitation of instrumental reason with the placebo of idealism. Benjamin was clearly trying to define a cognitively adequate expert against Kracauer's notion of the *Fachmann* as lacking a sense of totality, doing this by building his thoughts around a functional conception of work as opposed to Kracauer's cognitive terms.

In raising the issues of 'distraction' and the 'expert', Benjamin seems to be replying to important statements by Kracauer, and in both cases, he defends a fragmentary, broken, even debased sort of perception and cognition as adequate to modern conditions over the demands for a more traditionally total horizon of knowledge. If the Artwork essay is usually understood as part of an



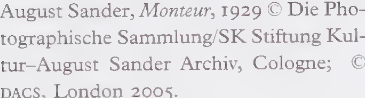
exchange between Benjamin and Adorno, it is clear, in the treatment of distraction and the expert, that it is part of a dialogue with Kracauer as well. In notes of early 1934, the time of the gestation of 'The Author as Producer' and the Artwork essay, is a fragment where, under the rubric 'Resistances to Functional Transformation' (*Umfunktionierung*, that is, of the author), Benjamin has entered the name 'Kracauer'.[129] The exchange between the two can be seen as a delayed dialogue, put off until the 1930s, at which point Benjamin could at last spar with Kracauer as an equal.[130]

The experts Benjamin knew came from the avant-garde, and one in particular fits the description of the expert perfectly – Sasha Stone. But if Stone might be seen to represent the sort of cultural figure Benjamin explored in *One-Way Street*, he would have served poorly as a model for the expert of the Artwork essay. For this kind of improvising technical expert was quickly becoming an anachronism in the inter-war years, representing an increasingly outdated relation of technology, capital and social status. The draughtsman and the artist, the technician and the cultural creator were for the most part separated and given their roles by more organised modes of training and more limiting configurations of industrial work. Stone's combination of metalworker,

artist and technician might be described in terms of a more nineteenth-century mode, that of the inventor (and Stone was one[131]), a mode of work which was largely marginalised or quickly bought off to be exploited on a corporate scale by the 1930s. For the combination of artist–technician that was, in the 1920s, becoming more viable, we should look to the other photographer who was so very important to Benjamin, László Moholy-Nagy. This model was still that of the artist, or, to be more precise, the professional of art, the art-school *professor*.

Unlike Stone, Moholy considered himself an artist and never renounced this cultural ambition in his work. He kept his distance from the technical trades whose tools he used: in his famous 'Telephone Paintings', ordered from a craftsman over the phone using graph paper and an industrial enamel catalogue, he took the role of the artistic executive, not craftsman; and even as a photographer, he famously 'never set foot in a darkroom'.[132] At the Bauhaus he happily accepted his professor's title (after the school jettisoned its earlier vocabulary of 'master' and 'apprentice'). When he left the Bauhaus to open an advertising practice, he did so as a member of an avant-garde and kept his title, clearly wanting to enter the trade as an artist, and at the top. Compare the striking portraits we have of these two figures. Both present themselves as the proletarian *Monteur* or mechanic – a typical pose of 1920s artists and a sign of the rejection of traditional 'art' – but they do so in very different ways. Moholy wears the working man's *Monteuranzug* or mechanic's overalls, but he wears them over a tie and spotlessly clean collar. He also stands before walls of single colours with sharp corners and perfect intersections that abstract him from the world of work into an impeccable and improbable constructivist space. More dramatically, hearsay tells us that the overalls were not the proletarian blue, but a flamboyant (and, if this is true, certainly bespoke) bright orange.[133] Stone instead stands nonchalantly in a workshop, hair tousled and cigarette in hand. And what is he wearing over his roll collar? Not an overcoat, for it is too straight in the lapels and too snug through the sleeves. An aviator's suit? Possibly. The fur collar suggests so, but the suit seems a bit less bulky than the flier's gear developed in the various armed forces at the time. A *Monteuranzug*? More likely. It is not the model that was slowly becoming standard issue in Germany at the time, but perhaps a type or hybrid brought from one of Stone's many trades in various lands. And if improvised, it was thereby thoroughly in line with the principles of work wear that still obtain today. In any case, Stone's overalls, like Moholy's, present him as a *Monteur*, but situate him more convincingly in the realm of mechanical labour.

Poses? Certainly, both of them. But they are also, with their overlapping dress code whose subtle distinctions send divergent signals, significant. Despite their



August Sander, *Monteur*, 1929 © Die Photographische Sammlung/SK Stiftung Kultur–August Sander Archiv, Cologne; © DACS, London 2005.

August Sander, *Engineer*, 1924 © Die Photographische Sammlung/SK Stiftung Kultur–August Sander Archiv, Cologne; © DACS, London 2004.

common denominator, the clothes figure the distinction between two kinds of experts, the *technician* and the *professional.* The distinction was a profound one in Germany at the time, and it allows us to understand the relationship between the artists of the typographical avant-garde and the psychotechnicians in a way that reveals its tension and its urgency. For both groups found themselves, in the 1920s, in the very same predicament. They were in new fields with no established social or professional status, and moreover fields that bordered upon, and without concerted action might be assimilated to, vocations that were modest and quite poorly paid. The intersection of and cooperation between the New Typographers at the Bauhaus and the psychotechnicians of the institutes and academies was, I want to argue, the result of the convergence of complementary tactics in a larger strategy for becoming a certain kind of expert, for achieving the status of professional.

The New Typographers were not trying to establish themselves as printers (who were working men) but rather as professionals of advertising. An important part of their strategy for attracting commissions was the claim to have

professional knowledge. The presence of psychotechnics on the Bauhaus curriculum was a guarantee of the scientific nature of the training offered students. Though not all of the New Typographers accepted the authority of psychotechnics, the scientific rhetoric of practitioners such as Jan Tschichold, Kurt Schwitters, Max Burchartz and Johannes Molzahn served the similar purpose of vouching for the kind of labour that clients would be buying.[134]

As a visual product, advertising was traditionally produced by printers in the employ of agencies that sold advertising space, its production and design not a profession in its own right. When artists as names became important in the decades before the First World War, they did so represented by printing houses. But as advertising grew in importance in the 1920s, it came to be organised as a trade in which draughtsmen worked as applied artists, as the hired hands of agencies; the coordination of ad campaigns was in the hands of business managers.[135] This is the organisation of labour that produced most of the anonymous advertising of the 1920s and 1930s, and which continues to prevail. But it obviously de-professionalised the work of artists, who had made inroads into the realm of advertising from the Jugendstil period through the early Werkbund years. When, in the 1920s, advertisers showed themselves reluctant to pay dearly for the aesthetic added value supplied by a well-known artist, artists needed to redefine the nature of the services they could provide and the labour they performed. The model developed by the Bauhaus and the German avant-garde was different from that proposed by the agencies; it involved a combination of artistic talent and professional knowledge, and it was an important professional role in the avant-garde. When Herbert Bayer and Moholy-Nagy bailed out of the Bauhaus in 1928, they found their feet as typographers in the role of advertising professionals, Bayer as head of the Dorland advertising agency's 'studio dorland' (where he signed his work and accepted outside commissions) and Moholy in a completely private practice as designer of advertisements and books. The New Typographers' was a rare form of business that united executive and artistic functions in a way that preserved the status of artist. Kurt Schwitters, Johannes Molzahn, Walter Dexel and others followed the model of private professional practice, which was rare in Germany at the time.[136]

For its part, psychotechnics represents an important stage in the professionalisation of psychology. As a field of study in which one could earn a degree, psychology did not exist in German universities and technical academies in the nineteenth century; 'psychologists' pursued their interests, which were of many kinds, not only physiological, within other institutional contexts, particularly medicine, physiology and most importantly philosophy. (Fritz Giese's degree, for example, was in philosophy; Hanns Riedel's was as an academic engineer.)

At the beginning of the 1920s, most of the university positions in psychology at universities or technical institutes carried the label 'psychotechnics', 'psychology and psychotechnics', or 'applied psychology'. During the course of the decade, psychotechnical professorships were created at six technical academies, and psychotechnical institutes or laboratories were started at, or affiliated with, several traditional universities. Psychotechnics represents the attempt to change psychology from a subset of medicine or a stepchild of philosophy to the status of a natural science in its own right.[137] In tailoring their services to industry and government, psychologists were seeking to carve out a niche and a funding base for a discipline that did not yet exist. Beyond research, the bulk of the psychotechnical periodical literature of the time consists of reports about the institutional developments, as each new foothold in industry, the army, municipal or state governments was of crucial importance for the field. The literature is also filled, predictably enough, with symptoms of professional anxiety, complaints about those who practiced under the term without proper qualifications and were giving the field a bad name.[138] In the end, the psychotechnicians achieved their goal. In the 1930s, those who had used this term to describe their work were among the best represented in the new field of psychology that was accepted in the universities as an academic subject in which degrees were awarded and chairs funded. Though the term 'psychotechnics', with its scientistic and rationalising tone, lost its currency, the professionalisation of psychology became a firmly established fact during the Third Reich, under which the psychologists – including Riedel and, until his death in 1935, Giese – flourished.[139]

Advertising was a field in which the psychotechnicians sought a foothold.[140] The countless studies of the psychology of advertising are eloquent testimony to their claim to have knowledge crucial to the creation and organisation of publicity campaigns and to have a place not only in administration, the military and universities, but also business, technical colleges, commercial academies – and art schools. This does not mean that in paying lip-service to psychotechnics and employing Riedel, the Bauhaus was accepting this propaganda, and in fact the work of the advertising workshop shows little evidence of any reading of the steady stream of literature the psychotechnicians produced on the subject. The artists were, however, accepting an alliance nonetheless. And it was an alliance important to both parties. This can be seen in the journal *Gebrauchsgraphik* or 'applied graphics', another centre of the attempt to establish design work in advertising as a profession, but one defined according to an artistic rather than a scientific model. *Gebrauchsgraphik* emerged out of the applied arts academies, and it rejected in no uncertain terms the new professionals who claimed to have knowledge from the laboratory and not from

practice. The rejection of psychotechnics by *Gebrauchsgraphik* is in fact quite convincing, and much scientific steam is let out of the pretenders by those with years of experience in the trade.[141] But the Bauhaus, in accepting psychotechnics, knew that they had to reject applied graphics. And so they did. Bayer wrote in the *bauhaus* journal of their acceptance of 'applied psychology' and their rejection of 'the fashionably aestheticising tendency of *gebrauchsgrafik*'.[142]

This alliance was, as I have said, tactical, and the Bauhaus's appeal to psychotechnics as professional knowledge was a gambit. And there was a price for the New Typographers to pay. The price was an alliance with a body of knowledge that struck fear in the hearts of the industrial proletariat as well as the new middle class of white-collar workers. They were familiar with the tyranny of the testers, and they usually resisted them.[143] Certainly, psychotechnics' instrumentalisation of the body and eye in the service of business sat uncomfortably with the socialist rhetoric of the Bauhaus and the New Typographers. They stubbornly refused to acknowledge the embodiment of the eye, its instrumentalisation and exploitation for business and commerce; when they discussed the 'New Vision' mediated by technology, they treated that technology in a social vacuum. Psychotechnics remained, for all the promise it seemed to offer, in the background, and the alliance remained largely without effects.

Except, perhaps, for one. When Benjamin showed interest in the work of the avant-garde, a fascination with the 'New Vision', the artists with whom he had contact were probably not keen to talk about experimental psychology in too much detail (and they might not even have been able to do so); and he learned no more from their published work. The result is a complex state of affairs that can perhaps best be expressed using a diagram from Wilhelm Wundt's *Principles of Physiological Psychology*. It is a diagram that shows both the kind of visual knowledge with which the constructivists flirted and the simple geometry they employed. But here Wundt is pointing not to scientific certainty but to physiological sources of optical error. Because of the absence of cones and rods on the retinal surface where it is joined by the optic nerve, there is a small but central area of each retina roughly 1.5 millimetres in diameter which does not register outside impulses. Because of the natural parallax of binocular vision, this perceptual gap can be filled with data from the other eye, so it is neither noticed nor, under normal circumstances, significant. Due, however, to the occasional need to use only one eye, a blind spot in the centre of vision can occasionally emerge. The diagram reveals the blind spot. If one covers over the right eye and looks at the small cross of Wundt's diagram from a distance of approximately one foot, the large circle disappears, falling into this area. This, in a way, is how Benjamin's problem can be described. He knew the work of the constructivist typographers, and he knew of the work of the psychotechni-

Flecks fallen. Fixirt man z. B., während das rechte Auge geschlossen ist, mit dem linken das Kreuzchen in Fig. 125, und hält das Buch in etwa

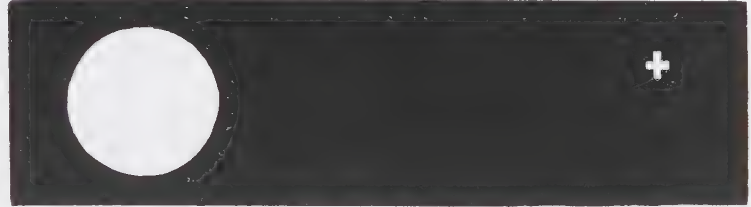


Fig. 125.

1 Fuss Entfernung, so verschwindet der Kreis vollständig. Sobald man nur um weniges das Auge näher oder ferner bringt, so taucht derselbe wieder auf. Hierbei werden aber meistens nicht etwa bloss diejenigen

Diagram revealing the retinal blind spot. From Wilhelm Wundt, *Grundzüge der physiologischen Psychologie* (Leipzig, 1874).

cians. Indeed, the New Typographers were Benjamin's closest connection to those who understood best the interaction of machine, movement and eye. But they were silent about the work of their psychologist colleagues, and for whatever reason, Benjamin must have blinked with one eye, for the precise point at which these two groups intersected – both of which fell within his field of vision or thought as he wrote the Artwork essay, both of which are so powerfully present – remained invisible to him. Hence Benjamin's strange naïvety about the role of the eye in production and leisure, when others already knew better; hence Benjamin's blind spot.

Nevertheless, in his notion of the 'expert', Benjamin was not being simply naïve. He was instead adjusting his conceptual tools quite carefully, trying to find a way of exploring modernity not only through the concept of class but also through an evolving notion of labour. For even to those who accepted Marx's analysis of capitalism, class seemed to be an inadequate, troublesome, even dangerously simplifying concept in the wake of Weimar's extremely unstable social structure, with significant signs of the 'embourgeoisement' of the proletariat, the 'proletarianisation' of white collar workers and the steep decline of the traditional *Mittelstand* of small merchants and craftsmen. To Kracauer writing in 1930, this 'traditional vocabulary' could no longer 'adjust at all to our new situation'.[144] The occasion for his thoughts was the appearance of a book called *Deutsche Berufskunde*. *Berufskunde*, or 'occupational studies', was a new notion that seemed to offer social knowledge not to be grasped in any other way. The thesis of the book was that 'with the dissolution of estates into

which one is born and the shifting class relations . . . the vocation remains the only power which forms masses and by which the masses can be categorised'.[145] The notion of a *Berufstand* or 'occupational estate' as the basis for a new social taxonomy, or, as Kracauer called it, 'physiognomy',[146] is, first of all, a conclusion drawn from an insight analogous to Brecht's well-known words from his *Threepenny Lawsuit* on the chasm opening up between social structures and their traditional representations, words quoted by Benjamin in 'A Small History of Photography': '[T]he situation is complicated by the fact that less than ever does the mere reflection of reality reveal anything about reality. A photograph of the Krupp works or the AEG tells us next to nothing about these institutions. Actual reality has slipped into the functional.'[147] Second, it is a sign of one particular and local epistemological crisis precipitated by the changing structure of society and organisation of production. It is precisely such a notion that August Sander explores in the complex organisation and subversive juxtapositions of his work *People of the Twentieth Century*, a project that so impressed Benjamin.[148]

In his invocation of the 'expert', Benjamin opens up the possibility of a new relation of knowledge to class. In his improvised work suit, Sasha Stone – highly educated, trained as both an academic engineer and an artist – presents himself as a working expert with his technical equipment; in his orange overalls, Moholy-Nagy – an educator – reveals himself as a professional, in other words a bourgeois expert with the emphasis on 'bourgeois'. The terms were weighty ones. Tretyakov had called, of course, for the 'de-professionalisation' of the writer and his new integration into society as a worker with 'expert knowledge' (*Fachwissen*) and 'technical equipment.'[149] And when the Soviet Union needed technical expertise in the period of the New Economic Policy, the time of Benjamin's journey there, they embraced the assistance of 'bourgeois experts' with the emphasis on 'expert', a phrase that implied the possibility of a 'Soviet expert'.[150] The notion of the 'expert', then, is an alternative to the bourgeois 'professional', a hypothetical mode of social existence leaving knowledge open to a different politics and freeing it from the pressures of class and status that were so powerfully inflecting it.

But the problem of class was an intractable one, even if, as a *concept*, it was of only limited value in understanding the relation of labour to knowledge or politics in Weimar and post-Weimar Germany. Let us look, for one last time, at the psychotechnicians. The psychotechnicians writing the books and lobbying for the new university chairs had degrees of various sorts; but who were the testers, the *Fachleute* or experts to whom Benjamin refers in the Artwork essay? Sander shows several in his *People of the Twentieth Century*. They wear suits and not overalls. They present themselves as professionals and not

mechanics. They call themselves *Ingenieure*, engineers. But the word 'engineer' did not mean any one stable sort of knowledge in Germany at the time, and still less did it define anyone by class or qualification, as blue-collar or white-collar (a similar situation still exists in England today). There were *Diplomingenieure*, graduates of the technical academies, and they could use the all-important title 'Dr.' But one could call oneself an engineer with a degree from a *Mittelschule*, which provided a polytechnical education. A foreman or *Werkmeister* with no academic qualifications at all could be also considered an engineer. And the testers in the field could be any of them: most trained 'psychotechnicians' were not university educated psychologists but were trained by the new professionals only enough to carry out the tests, often among their other duties.[151] 'Engineers' of all types were considered *technische Angestellte* or 'technical employees' and were compressed into a group in which no one subgroup was able to assert any traditional or practical edge in production, or any distinct status beyond the world of work. All – from the master with family and occupational roots in the proletariat, to the middle level of technical training, to the declassed 'doctors' who didn't make it into management – were part of that group of 'employees' with claims to bourgeois status and pay that often amounted to little more than that of the average skilled worker, the politically precarious, proletarianised 'new middle class'. It is a group that makes the *functional* notion of a *Berufstand* a perfectly sensible one, but destroys the *political* possibility of it from within as different groups, divided by education and qualification, vied for professional status at the expense of the others.[152] All of which renders problematic Benjamin's dedication of *One-Way Street* to Asja Lacis, revolutionary dramatist from Latvia and his occasional lover: 'This street is named Asja Lacis Street after her who as engineer cut it through the author.'[153] These are the razor-sharp words of a constructivist thinker. But Benjamin could not see or chose to ignore what Sander depicts so clearly in his photographs of 'technicians': the tense poses and worried looks of the engineers which show the mutability of the term and the deeply unheroic reality of the profession at the time.

And who were the monteurs? The avant-garde liked to imagine them as the non-bourgeois technician-heroes, the proletarian experts. This was the term that George Grosz and John Heartfield used to sign their works; this was the role that Rodchenko took on in the Soviet Union; this was the modern Everyman. Consider this description of the monteur as expert, solving problems by habit:

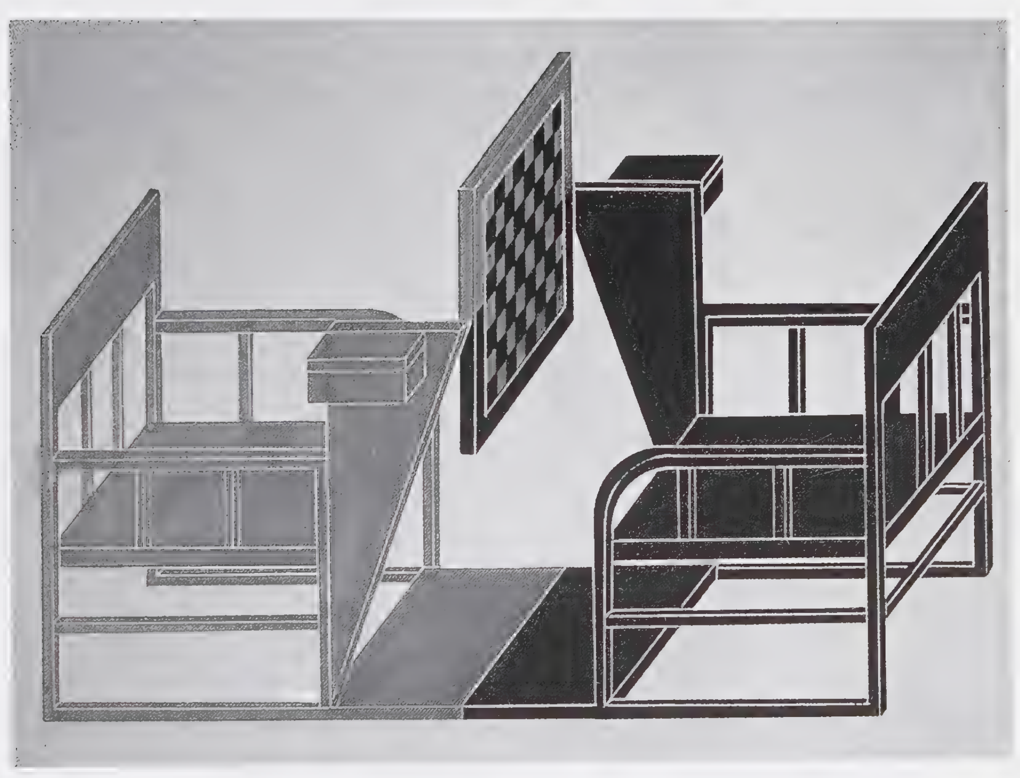
> If you could imagine this Krenek the way he really was, a mechanic for the Berlin Electricity Works [BEWAG *Monteur*], 181 cm., 70 kg., 19 years old, worth 4 paper Marks per hour, sailing along in blue overalls and living in the [pro-

LEFT Benjamin and Brecht playing chess, Skovbostrand, Denmark, summer of 1934. Bertolt-Brecht Archiv, Stiftung Archiv der Akademie der Künste, Berlin, BBA FA 7/29. Photograph from Erdmut Wizisla, *Benjamin und Brecht: Die Geschichte einer Freundschaft* (Frankfurt A.M., 2004).

FACING PAGE Alexander Rodchenko, Chess table. Design for the USSR Workers' Club at the *Exposition Internationale des Artd Décoratifs et Industriels Modernes*, Paris, 1925. Black and red india ink and gouache on paper. Photograph courtesy Howard Schickler Fine Art, New York.

> letarian] north, then you won't be a bit surprised by the following. It was precisely 11.00, 29 April 1921, the corner of Linden- and Charlottenstrasse in Berlin, at the switching box of the arc lights, whistling dreamily as he tested the red row of lights . . . when a rushing taxi cut the corner and ran over his left foot.[154]

This is the world through the expert's eyes, where characterisation is the nonchalant report of relevant technical data. Indeed Krenek, distracted and whistling dreamily, would go on to address problems of world-historical importance. Yet these were the problems of a radical right: the passage is from Arnolt Bronnen's O.S., a fascist modernist novel of 1929 describing the early *Freikorps* and their fight for the blood and soil of Germany in Upper Silesia. The monteurs were fought over as symbols of the avant-garde right as well as the left, just as they were a contested group politically. For the most part, the mechanics of many kinds were part of the upper segment of the proletariat, the skilled labourers, once the backbone of the Social Democratic Party but



the group that was discussed at the time in terms of the 'embourgeoisement of the proletariat.' This is precisely the group that drove a wedge between the Social Democrats and the Communist Party (and not only strategic failures from Moscow). The monteur was the class-conscious proletarian in only rare cases and in problematic ways.[155]

Thus the experts in and out of suits were converging politically, but were moving together towards the right and not the left. By 1935/36, when the Artwork essay was first drafted, this was history. In his incarnation as artist-technician or proletarian, the expert no longer existed, and in fact he never had done. Walter Benjamin might well have been aware of the problem of embourgeoisement, widely discussed at the time, and his Artwork essay might be seen to argue that cultural forms had the potential to combat the pernicious side of the development of professional cultures. What he was not aware of, however, was the way in which the process of professionalisation, the distance between technician and artist, between engineer and professor, and the one-way street leading to the bourgeois camp, affected the models of liberated vision he found

in the avant-garde. The claim of both constructivists and psychologists to be experts of a professional sort is what led to their brief alliance as well as the discomfort that led them, in good Brechtian fashion, to cover their tracks.

Dangerous Games

When Benjamin visited Brecht in Denmark in 1934, the two would play chess in their spare time. On 12 July, Brecht remarked: 'You know, when [Karl] Korsch comes, we really ought to work out a new game with him. A game in which the moves do not always stay the same, where the function of each piece changes after it has stood in the square for a while. . . . The way in which it is now, the game doesn't develop, it stays the same way for too long.'[156] Benjamin opens his 'Theses on the Philosophy of History' with the image of a chess-playing puppet with a hunchback inside,[157] but I think Brecht's game offers as much help in understanding them, and the Artwork essay as well. The Artwork essay represents just such a game. If a moment of the kind Benjamin describes had ever existed, it would have been a revolutionary one, a checkmate suspending the flow of history; but none of the pieces he was manipulating – the experiences, social types and concepts he was moving back and forth and arranging into a revolutionary state – had remained the same. The way in which the characters moved changed all the time. Even the hope of a revolutionary expert no longer really existed when Benjamin needed him most. If the result of a game is one final configuration of the set of simultaneous possibilities with which it starts, the Artwork essay has a certain sort of nonsimultaneity built in. It does not correspond to any moment that really existed or could exist, representing instead a palimpsest of revolutionary possibilities from different moments of history. Some were clearly in place; some might perhaps have emerged; but others had already passed.

In the 'Theses', Benjamin called the revolutionary moment a 'moment of danger'.[158] He realised that thinking in modernity was a risky business. The historian had to have the speed and intellectual agility to hit targets, to avoid moving hazards, to duck, hide and grasp at the right moments. He described this as the task of seizing an image of revolutionary possibility from the past at the precise instant at which it is recognised. With the revolution, mankind would be redeemed and the past would 'become citable in all its moments', bringing to a halt the changes that were the accumulated catastrophes of history, bringing time to a standstill of redemption.[159] Benjamin found premonitions of that moment as an intellectual, in books; and this simultaneity

when all possibilities were available at any moment represents a book-space that could be either cabbalist or constructivist. The problem was, perhaps, that the utopia of a constructivist simultaneity was a mirage that appeared at the moment of danger because he was moving into a blind spot created by configurations of professional, and not expert, vision.

Übermuthig sieht's nicht aus
Dieses stille Gartenhaus
Allen die darin verkehrt
Ward ein guter Muth bescheert
Goethe

NONSIMULTANEITY

ERNST BLOCH AND WILHELM PINDER

My legacy, how grand, broad and wide!
Time is my property, my field is Time.
– Goethe, *Wilhelm Meisters Wanderjahre*[1]

Enigmas of Arrival

The title page of Ernst Bloch's *Erbschaft dieser Zeit* ('Inheritance of This Time') bears the date 1935, but it appeared, it seems, in late October of 1934, more than two months early.[2] The book is an intricate mosaic combining essays and sketches Bloch published during the Weimar period with more recent text, all arranged around the core of Bloch's concept of *Ungleichzeitigkeit*, translated variously as 'noncontemporaneity', 'nonsynchronicity', or 'nonsimultaneity'. Nonsimultaneity is the concept through which Bloch develops a Marxist theory of the nature of culture under twentieth-century modernity, a theory that allows him to cast considerable light on the reasons for the popular success of fascism and the failure of socialism in Germany at the same time as he begins to work out a strategy by which the left might reclaim political ground by cultural means. Though idiosyncratic in style and superseded in matters of historical detail, the book remains imposing in its range of reference, extraordinary in its insight and precise in articulation. All in all, it is an impressive performance and a valuable contribution to critical theories of culture.

Yet to this day, the book has not received the renown or reputation that it certainly merits. In contrast to the abundant attention paid to Walter Benjamin's relatively rare and occasionally oblique references to National Socialism and Siegfried Kracauer's approach to fascism through Weimar mass culture, scant notice has been taken of Bloch's ambitious work on the topic. Instead his contribution to the cultural battles of the day has been seen almost exclusively in the so-called expressionism debate.[3] Perhaps the key to the problem can be found on the post-dated title page of *Erbschaft dieser Zeit*. The book appeared, it would seem, too early to be part of a distanced debate over the problems of nazism and culture. The time for reflection had not yet arrived.

FACING PAGE Engraving of Goethe's garden house, Weimar. Caption reads: 'Not at all pretentious / This little garden house / All who gather there / Leave behind their cares'.

Indeed, the problematic reception of *Erbschaft dieser Zeit* dates from its premature appearance before the official date of release. For its earliest audience, however, the book arrived too late, its material too old to have any real value. Kracauer, it has been speculated, was annoyed that the book merely reprinted what he considered a mediocre review of his own book, *Die Angestellten* ('White-Collar Workers') of 1930.[4] Benjamin was even more uncomfortable, having been warned by friends that the ambivalent review of his *Einbahnstraße* ('One-Way Street') that Bloch had written in 1928 had also been rehashed and not reconsidered with the temporal distance now possible. His relationship with Bloch had always been strained, and at issue was usually a matter of priority: both worried that their ideas would be stolen and published first by the other.[5] And then, the book never arrived. On 26 December 1934, Benjamin wrote to his friend Gershom Scholem, 'Bloch's *Erbschaft dieser Zeit* has been out for weeks. But do you think I have so much as laid eyes on the book? I know only this much, that . . . I am both congratulated on the tribute shown me in the text and defended against the invective it directs at me – allegedly contained in the same passages. Even a letter from the author himself has already arrived.'[6] Benjamin felt forced to draft a response to Bloch – before he read the book.[7] Benjamin did, a few weeks later, read *Erbschaft dieser Zeit*, and he chose to defuse tensions. But his correspondence with others reveals that his response to the book was, in the end, negative, again on the grounds that it had arrived too late:

> The severe reproach I must level against the book . . . is that it in no way corresponds to the circumstances under which it has appeared. Instead, it is as out of place as a fine gentleman who, having arrived to inspect an area demolished by an earthquake, has nothing more urgent to do than immediately spread out the Persian rugs that his servants had brought along and which were, by the way, already somewhat moth-eaten; set up the gold and silver vessels, which were already somewhat tarnished; have himself wrapped in brocade and damask gowns, which were already somewhat faded. Bloch obviously has excellent intentions and considerable insights. But he does not understand how to thoughtfully put them into practice.[8]

It is the complex temporality of the appearance of Bloch's theory of non-simultaneity – the section dated May 1932 but known to even his closest friends only at the very end of 1934 – that seems to lie behind the criticism it received. Bloch was certainly thinking hard about this issue of historical arrival: the book came too late, but the title shows that the author was trying to move history forward enough to act while there was still time. *Erbschaft dieser Zeit*: an attempt to identify the inheritance to be received even while the moment had not yet passed, and certainly not passed away. 'Of course the aunt whose estate one

wants to inherit must first be dead; but one can have a very good look round the room beforehand.'[9] The trope is the same as that behind Robert Musil's title for the collection of essays he published the following year, *Nachlaß zu Lebzeiten* ('Legacy in My Lifetime').[10] But it impressed no one. Benjamin dryly commented: 'I would like to learn what I, as a child of my time, am likely to inherit of my work from it.'[11]

To write of Bloch as himself nonsimultaneous with the various times of his long life – he lived from 1885 to 1977 – has become something of a commonplace, but that is not my purpose here. There are other reasons for wanting to look into the origins of the notion of *Ungleichzeitigkeit*. The first is historical: the idea of nonsimultaneity emerged out of a debate among art historians and theorists of culture about periodicity and the nature of historical time, and it came to inflect debates on architecture and the thorny issue of the relation of modernism to fascism. The second is more contemporary. There is much talk today of the possibility of a 'politics of time', and some of it is rather loose.[12] In this context, the strange story of the genesis of Bloch's attempt to catalogue an inheritance pre-posthumously offers something very rare: a case study.

History of Nonsimultaneity

> *Men make their own history, but they do not make it just as they please; they do not make it under circumstances chosen by themselves, but under circumstances directly encountered, given, and transmitted from the past. The tradition of all the dead generations weighs like a nightmare on the brain of the living.*
>
> – Karl Marx, *The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte*[13]

Bloch accepted Marx's analysis of capital and his analysis of history. He did not, however, toe the Communist Party line. Though he (scandalously) supported Stalin through the 1930s and (less scandalously) chose to live in the German Democratic Republic from 1949 (when he left his American exile) until 1961 (he was in the Federal Republic when the Wall was built, and he chose to remain), he disagreed strongly with party policy on propaganda issues and cultural matters during the inter-war years. He rejected both the Second International's mechanistic view of history as a process that would lead spontaneously and inevitably to the collapse of capitalism, and the Third International's refusal of a tactical alliance with the noncommunist opposition to

fascism.[14] He stressed the need to mobilise the political subject emotionally and recognised early on that the right had done so far more effectively than the left. The forces of reaction, he realised, had managed to strike a chord in the electorate: 'Nazis speak deceitfully, but to people; Communists quite truthfully, but only about things.'[15] In *Erbschaft dieser Zeit*, he explores the strategies of the right by means of a sociological analysis of the subjective experience of historical time.

'Not all people exist in the same Now', writes Bloch under the rubric 'Non-simultaneity and the Obligation to Its Dialectic.'

> They do so only externally, through the fact that they can be seen today. But they are thereby not yet living at the same time with the others.
>
> Instead they carry earlier elements with them; this interferes. Depending on where someone stands physically, and above all in terms of class, he has his times. Older times than the modern ones continue to have an effect in older strata; it is easy to make or dream one's way back into older ones here. . . . In general, various years beat in the one which is just being counted . . . [They] contradict the Now; very strangely, crookedly, from behind.[16]

These different times, the different 'nows', can be determined with a fair degree of precision using the coordinates of age, class and geography. Bloch focuses on three impoverished groups, on their uncomfortable relation to the present and their susceptibility to the siren-song of the right. Youth, he writes, inevitably rejects its present; thus there is no politically centrist youth movement. The right has the funds to support and seduce unemployed youth; while the better off, the '[y]oung people of bourgeois origin yet without bourgeois prospects, go to the right in any case, where they are promised some'.[17] Most important has been the rhetoric of a 'conservative revolution', the stress on charismatic leadership, and the more successful appropriation of existing institutions of youth protest. The second group is the peasantry, which '[s]till lives almost exactly like its forefathers, does the same as them'.[18] Though the economic base of such an existence has become marginal, the material social and legal structures (centring on the individual ownership of land for cultivation) anachronistically remain. Farmers, in other words, are tied to an outdated means of production, to the soil; they experience their world in a way that is not 'modern', that is in contradiction to the economics of the present. Yet their experience is genuine and their concerns real, and these experiences and concerns are the real base of an ideology of blood and soil to which fascism spoke. The 'now' that orients the urban middle class is yet another zone of temporality. Its self-image as bourgeois is based on the relative financial security of the earlier Wilhelmine bourgeoisie. Though the precarious social position of salaried employees was closer to that of the proletariat than to a secure middle

class, their self-image was one that made sense in an earlier age, their actions governed by feelings of entitlement to a non-existent social position, their politics the nationalism and conservatism that historically provided an ideological home to this group. Thus their memories make them, too, 'alien to their time'.[19] Each group had its own present, one that made sense on its own real and materially existing terms, but one that was out of sync with the development of capitalist modernity.

Bloch is careful not to dismiss the groups that had moved to the right as in themselves reactionary: 'It is certainly right to say that it is part of the nature of Fascist ideology to incorporate the morbid resources of all cultural phases; but it is wrong to say only the morbid.'[20] These energies were anti-capitalist, and they were energies that could be of use to the revolution, but they had not been harnessed by the left. 'If misery struck only simultaneous people, even though of differing position, origin, and consciousness,' they would understand 'Communist language', which is 'fully simultaneous and oriented exactly to the most advanced economy.'[21] But the differing classes are, precisely, nonsimultaneous: 'Impulses and reserves from pre-capitalist times and superstructures are then at work, genuine nonsimultaneities which a sinking class revives or causes to be revived in consciousness.'[22]

Bloch refines his terms in a way that allows him to argue implicitly against both the Second International's belief in the spontaneity of capitalist decline and the Third International's exclusive focus on the class consciousness of a narrowly defined proletariat. The notion of a 'multileveled' or 'multidimensional' dialectic does this sort of double duty. The contradictions by which the dialectic moved forward are analysed in terms of objective and subjective sides. 'Objective' contradictions represent remnants of the past, both material and ideological; they are the 'continuing influence of older relations and forms of production . . . as well as of older superstructures'.[23] Germany, the 'classic land of nonsimultaneity', was particularly rich in such social remnants and outdated social forms.[24] 'Subjective' contradictions are the emotional experience of the subject in such a position. The 'subjective non-simultaneous contradiction' of youth, the peasantry and the middle class takes the form of 'accumulated rage',[25] which can activate the objective contradictions as political force in any direction; the 'subjective simultaneous contradiction' of the proletariat is revolutionary action. The point of these analytic nuts and bolts is that contradictions in the relations of production do not drive a dialectic in any sort of one-dimensional progress forward in time, but need instead to be channelled; furthermore, the contradictions are not found or felt only at the most advanced class ('simultaneous contradictions') but filter down through declining remnants and layers of the unresolved past ('nonsimultaneous contradictions').

The multilayered dialectic is described intricately and scrupulously, but the issues are simple enough. They concern the social situations, superstructural institutions and subjective energies of capitalism in crisis, the broad gamut of the raw materials of revolution, the detritus of declining social forms and cultural material that had been abandoned by the left and bequeathed to the reaction. The left, wrote Bloch, could and needed to claim these contradictions for itself instead of leaving them to National Socialism to blow off the dust and refunction them for political use. The elements of the past were the political material of the present. This is what was at stake in the issue of cultural heritage or *Erbe*, the reason to have a good look around the musty rooms and dark closets of that old aunt, that pensioner on borrowed time, that wealthy widow called capitalism.

*

The concept of nonsimultaneity can be given a pedigree that is completely Marxist. Indeed, Marx himself provided all the tools that were required. One of these was the notion of base and superstructure from the preface to the *Critique of Political Economy*: 'The sum total of these relations of production constitutes the economic structure of society, the real foundation, on which rises a legal and political superstructure and to which correspond definite forms of social consciousness. . . . It is not the consciousness of men that determines their being, but, on the contrary, their social being [*Sein*] that determines their consciousness [*Bewußtsein*].'[26] And in *Erbschaft dieser Zeit*, Bloch introduces the second tool, the discussion of the 'uneven rate of development' in the introduction to the *Critique of Political Economy*. It is an unevenness that can refer, as Bloch implies, to the different rates of development in the base and superstructure (to the extent, of course, to which one accepts the distinction or wishes to deploy it in any given analysis), or to the unevenness of economic development between societies or nations, or even between different sectors or regions within them.[27] The base–superstructure formula can simply be crossed with the idea of uneven development, yielding a modified formula that reads something like the following: consciousness can be determined (simultaneously) by social being, or (nonsimultaneously) by 'unsurmounted remnants of older economic being [*Sein*] and consciousness [*Bewußtsein*]'.[28]

The evidence of terminology and contemporary debates, however, suggests a derivation more obscure and more troubling. Bloch's theory and the terms by which he elaborated it emerged out of discussions in the historical and human sciences and, in particular, out of the history of art in Germany. To understand it, we need to look specifically at the work of Wilhelm Pinder, a complex figure who was perhaps the most influential and widely read his-

Wilhelm Pinder (1878–1947). Photograph courtesy Prof. Dr. Heinrich Dilly, Halle.

torian of art in Germany from the 1910s through the Second World War. Pinder was the main force behind the founding of the most important art-historical journal of the period, *Kritische Berichte*, and was an effective, though moderate, supporter of modern tendencies in art and architecture. But he was also an early enthusiast for National Socialism, sharing the podium with Martin Heidegger to show the universities' solidarity with Hitler in the heady early days of political power. His relations with the regime cooled over the course of the 1930s, and he was never quite the ideologue as, say, Hans Sedlmayr, but despite his increasing distance from the Nazi elite, he was imprisoned by the Allies after the war (perhaps due to mistaken identity) and died in 1947, in the wake of this disgrace.[29] In 1926 Pinder created a stir with a book called *Das Problem der Generation in der Kunstgeschichte Europas* ('The Problem of Generation in the History of European Art'). At the core of Pinder's discussion was his concept of '*die "Ungleichzeitigkeit" des Gleichzeitigen*' (the nonsimultaneity of the simultaneous), and the remarkable similarity that Bloch's formulations bear to this discussion is no mere coincidence.

Das Problem der Generation and an article that preceded it[30] were Pinder's contribution to the methodological debates in the German-language historiography of art during the Weimar period; they also represent one art historian's response to the so-called 'crisis of historicism', which was widely felt in the

Leonardo Da Vinci, *The Last Supper*, *c.*1495–98, Santa Maria delle Grazie, Milan.

human sciences, or *Geisteswissenschaften*, at the time. Pinder seeks to circumvent the problems of art history's traditional idealism and historicism, tendencies of thought that had established the intellectual profile of the discipline but which, after the contributions of the likes of Alois Riegl, Heinrich Wölfflin and Max Dvořák, had proven to be unwieldy as a practical base and shaky as an epistemological foundation.

Pinder starts with a conundrum. Presented with a work of art, the traditional tools of stylistic analysis and their use in a Wölfflinian 'art history without names' will yield an *approximately* correct dating. The problem is that these tools have a certain built-in error, one that has nothing to do with the skill with which they are deployed. Pinder puts pressure on this source of error by focusing on the banal fact that artists of different generations work side by side. Two works could have been executed simultaneously, but the art historian constructs 'men of an indeterminate standard age',[31] ideal types that cause him to date the *late* work of an *older* artist before the *early* work of a *younger* artist:

> Let us imagine that Leonardo's *Last Supper* (1494–98) and Filippino's frescoes in Santa Maria Novella in Florence (1502) were still [in the absence

Filippino Lippi, The Resuscitation of Drusiana, finished 1502, Santa Maria Novella, Florence.

> of documentation] to be considered within the parameters of an 'art history without names.' Would not the difference of stylistic 'phase' be expressed in a dating that completely reverses the actual temporal relation? . . . [Often] generational differences produce, when they are misread, an absolutely false historical picture. A picture of 1924 by Max Liebermann and a picture of 1914 by Franz Marc – without knowledge of the age difference, what art history without names would express this stylistic difference by a correct dating . . . or even place them in the right chronological order?[32]

'There is no simple "present"', writes Pinder eight years before *Erbschaft dieser Zeit*, 'because every historical "moment" [*Augenblick*] is experienced by people with their *own* different senses of historical duration; each moment means something different for everyone – *even a different time*.'[33] A particular style or idiom is not the simple and unmediated product of a spirit of the age; the periodicity of styles seems instead to respond to the date of birth of an artist, dates which, according to Pinder, show a remarkable tendency to cluster around particular and identifiable generations whose formal possibilities the art historian analyses in terms of specific generational 'problematics'. What determines the generational style is not a shared experience of the world but

rather an 'inborn task which lasts an entire lifetime',[34] a telos or 'fate' that is different from all others but not in any way more advanced. This generational 'will' Pinder terms 'entelechy'; it is an 'essence' that remains constant but unfolds temporally and develops 'more strongly as a result of birth than experience'. 'It is as if *one is born with experiences*'.[35] There are, however, entelechies other than those of birth that determine the development of artistic form, the entelechies of nation, of race, of 'body type'. The entelechies are a 'mystery' but a 'fact of nature'.[36]

Enough. Pinder starts with an insight born of the practical problems of dating and stylistic analysis but ultimately emerges on the far side of biological determinism and theories of race. His theory cannot, however, be so easily dismissed as a simple and sterile mutation. First, such habits of thought were not so rare or politically suspect in the Weimar period as one tends to assume. (One need only consider Benjamin's continuing interest in graphology and his productive engagement with the work of Ludwig Klages, which will be discussed in the next chapter.) Indeed, Bloch found the notion of the 'entelechy' to be quite helpful, though not in *Erbschaft dieser Zeit*. As an immanent telos of matter, the concept figures centrally in Bloch's process philosophy, in his categories of 'tendency', 'latency', and ultimately 'utopia' which he developed in his book *Das Materialismusproblem*, written in 1936–37, directly following *Erbschaft dieser Zeit*.[37] (The notion of 'entelechy', however, would not necessarily have come from Pinder, having a long and distinguished history dating back to Aristotle's speculative materialism.) Second, and more importantly, Pinder has a perfectly valid, indeed necessary, brief. The entelechies allow him, for one, to criticise art history's sense of a spiritually unified time and a single style that expresses it. Since every moment is experienced differently, there can be no single spirit that unifies it. The appearance of a period style and of a *Zeitgeist* dissolves, and any apparent 'colour' or 'tenor' of an age is described as the 'accidental accord' of different patterns of experience.[38] The problem of generations also allows Pinder to challenge art history's sense of unilinear time and development: he 'declares war' on the 'idea of a single valid "homogeneous time" with its unified "progress", its inescapable "present" that ploughs over . . . existences . . . whose true essence consists in the fact that they are of different ages and participate in different "presents" '.[39] To a notion of the one-dimensional movement of historical time, Pinder opposes a three-dimensional historical space in which each 'point of time' is a plumb line through a broad band encompassing various generations rhythmically staggered and unfolding at different stages. (Compare Bloch: 'History is not an essence advancing linearly, in which capitalism, for instance, as the final stage, has resolved all previous stages, but is rather a *polyrhythmic and multispatial entity with enough unmastered and as yet by no means revealed and resolved corners*.'[40]) Just as Bloch's

notion of nonsimultaneity is a challenge to the traditional tendency of institutionalised Marxism to fall into historical determinism and its belief in an unproblematic progress, Pinder's book represents a challenge to art history's traditionally unilinear sense of historical time, and where Bloch raised the 'problem of a multi-layered dialectic', Pinder had already written of art history's need to address the 'multi-leveled reality' of history.[41]

A theory of 'nonsimultaneity', the exploration of a 'multi-layered' time, perhaps even the importance attached to 'entelechies': Bloch, like many others at the time, had read Pinder's texts on the 'problem of generation'. In the wake of the First World War and the German youth movement, the differences between generations and their experience of the world had become an important issue, and Pinder's widely read book was only one of several treatments of the problem. Though Bloch had called attention to the lack of synchronicity between historical experience and broad patterns of historical change as early as his Würzburg dissertation of 1908, it is the problematic of generations that gave the decisive impetus for the ambitious reconsideration of the issue that represents the core of *Erbschaft dieser Zeit*.[42] In 1927, sociologist Karl Mannheim wrote an article summarising the growing literature on the problem of generation, and he called Pinder's concepts of nonsimultaneity and the generational entelechies 'valuable, even a stroke of genius'.[43] Bloch, intellectual *bricoleur par excellence*, was hardly one to let someone else's stroke of genius go unused. In the late 1920s, Bloch was in close contact with Mannheim, and it might well have been through him that Bloch came to Pinder. Before leaving the issue of where Bloch found the building blocks of his politics of time, it is worth mentioning another work of Mannheim's: his essay on 'Conservative Thought', also of 1927. For here Mannheim incorporates his own version of the notion of nonsimultaneity – he calls it 'enduring actuality' – and makes the point that 'an attitude derived from social circumstances and situations anchored in the past' represented an 'authentic style of experience', and moreover one that would 'play a dynamic role within the modern struggle of ideas'.[44] These are insights that are central to Bloch's willingness to grapple with ideas that had been hijacked by the right and his attempt to incorporate the accumulated rage of those left behind, those who had waited but finally fell into step with the political reaction.

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Philosophy of Nonsimultaneity

> *I believe (though I may be wrong) that some of the recent discussion was anticipated by myself when I was young, in the Appendix to an article . . . where I tried to define the difference between 'historical' time and 'chronological' time.*
>
> – Erwin Panofsky, letter to Siegfried Kracauer[45]

By the time Bloch wrote on nonsimultaneity, the concept already existed, but there was still some complex philosophical work to be done. One could not simply remove the biological excesses of Pinder's treatment and replace it with a sociological view of the specificity of generational experience (though this is precisely what Mannheim and others suggested).[46] What was required was a clarification of the nature of historical time.

The critique of a chronological sense of historical time as 'homogeneous' or 'unilinear' was an old one in the German cultural sciences. The uniqueness of historical cultures was stressed in that line of thought stretching from Schleiermacher through Herder to Dilthey, then branching out into sociology and the history of art, that saw in differing positions in time not more or less advanced states but simply a historically specific state. It is a view, like Pinder's, that rejects both timeless norms and any notion of progress. 'Inner time' or experienced time could not be measured (and the appeal of theories of generations was that they seemed to provide a 'natural' unit by which experience could be periodised). The problem of a philosophy of history based on a notion of subjective time as the only 'real' time, however, is that it undermines the basis of a knowledge that is specifically historical. Eras can be judged only on their own terms. From the outside they can only be described in terms of artefactual remains, and without a properly analytical position outside a subjective state of mind, only non-immanent, external explanations of change can be proposed.

The challenge was to mediate between time as experienced and time as the object of historical knowledge. In 1916 Georg Simmel, until 1914 Bloch's teacher and friend, published one of the most ambitious and ingenious analyses of the problem, an essay called 'The Problem of Historical Time'.[47] He was particularly well suited to the task. Though versed in neo-Kantian epistemological concerns, he was moving towards *Lebensphilosophie*, or a philosophy that stressed the importance of lived experience. His argument is complex and clever – vintage Simmel – and worth summarising, as it was a reference point for many discussions of the philosophy of history at the time.

Something can be known *historically*, writes Simmel, only if it can be placed securely in a sequence of events. Simply knowing that something took place in the past does not constitute true historical knowledge until it can be oriented in relation to other events. Yet he accepts that historical time is in its nature discontinuous; he is not arguing for the need to fix sequences in terms of a steady, abstract and quantifiable calendar time, a time he terms 'atomized'. The other *sine qua non* of historical knowledge is that it be knowledge of historical *experience*, and this can be known only by an empathic understanding, or *Verstehen*, of the experience of the past. Here, however, there is a contradiction. *Verstehen* is radically *ahistorical*. The empathic re-experience of an event can be divorced from reality – the experience of a fictional event, for example the fatal empathy with Goethe's Werther, is not historical knowledge – and it says little about the placement of something in time.

At this point, Simmel enters into art-historical debates, taking on, it would seem, none other than Heinrich Wölfflin. A re-experienced event in the past can *include* time; the event can be the causal emergence of one phenomenon from another, which is temporal. But this does not make it historical, for it does not position the entire event in history. Rather, the time experienced, the time known, is an immanent and thus ahistorical one. Simmel refers to art historiography's touchstone for the study of historical change, the mutation or evolution from classic to baroque – the subject of Wölfflin's famous *Principles of Art History* published the year before Simmel's essay.[48] Here Wölfflin sought to explain this historical change, concluding that it was the result of a change in the mode of beholding, a change preprogrammed in a constant alteration through history of the two possibilities of visual perception. Simmel's argument is that such a model of change – that every classic has its corresponding baroque – is immanent to the event discussed; it cannot be explained in terms of other events before and after and says nothing about its placement in historical time. In other words, Wölfflin's is not a historical explanation at all.

Simmel's solution? That the two mutually exclusive criteria of historical knowledge – ahistorical *Verstehen*, or re-experience, and the exact placement in a series – can be met at the same time only when history, or a portion of it, is grasped as a totality, a totality in which each event, unlike Wölfflin's eternal recurrence of the change from classic to baroque, can have only one determinate position. A closed totality gives an outside, Archimedean point from which events can be *both* positioned *and* experienced.

Simmel's reaction to Wölfflin was part of the sustained and productive interchange between art history and philosophy in early twentieth-century Germany that is central to these chapters, an exchange in which each field looked to the other to sharpen its tools. Simmel responded to Wölfflin, and it is interesting to see who picked up the thread and responded to Simmel. It was Erwin

Panofsky. Panofsky was one of the most intellectually agile and ambitious young art historians working in Germany in the 1920s, and it is no surprise that he would find Simmel's discussion of Wölfflin and historical time an irresistible challenge. What is perhaps surprising is that he responds, at the same time, to Pinder's *Problem der Generation.*

The text at issue here is an appendix to an article Panofsky published in 1927 on the four architects of the cathedral of Reims; the appendix alone was later reprinted under the Simmelian title 'On the Problem of Historical Time'.[49] Panofsky re-dates the work of the architects and the sculptors who decorated the different building campaigns in varying stylistic modes, pointing to the clear presence of what Pinder called 'nonsimultaneity'. But he is not interested in letting Pinder have the last word on the matter. Instead, he takes the opportunity to explore some of the implications of the theory of art-historical nonsimultaneity and generations, and he does so by playing Simmel against Pinder.[50]

If one accepts Pinder's account as it stands, Panofsky seems to ask, must one not, following Simmel, reject the possibility of meaningfully placing these events in historical time?

> If . . . the chronologically simultaneous pieces are stylistically so different, even appearing to be from different ages, is it still permissible to consider an art-historical problem as an historical problem? . . . For it is self-evident that . . . if one rejects the idea of historical simultaneity, then its corollary, i.e. the idea of different historical times, must also be rejected, and thus the idea of an historical temporal relation proves to be practically unproductive and even logically contradictory.[51]

In other words, Pinder's theory of nonsimultaneity denies the existence of a meaningful relation between events that occur in different subjectively experienced times. Each generation is born with its 'entelechy'; its activity is simply the unfolding of the different formal possibilities existing within the parameters of this problematic. Panofsky's point is a valid one. Born with its fate, each generation lives out an already defined problem, making their interaction with others living at the same chronological time incidental, a matter of accident. The generations are, for Pinder, indivisibly individual phenomena, utterly unique, irruptions of nature. History is defined spontaneously, at the moment, from the moment, out of the moment. Like a cast of the dice – this is Pinder's telling image – the event is not determined by previous events and does not determine subsequent events. The moment is simply there, a matter of complete immanence, a mystery, a miracle.[52] This means that, in Simmel's terms, moments are not situated in a properly historical time, as the order in which they appear cannot be seen as necessary or meaningful.

And thus, quite correctly, Panofsky calls the Pinderian scepticism about historical simultaneity 'nihilistic'.[53] But Panofsky does not accept the problem that Pinder defines as a valid one. The incongruity between 'lived' or 'experienced' time and historical time is a fallacious problem, he writes, a mirage that is the result of a 'conceptual duplicity' of the historian's habits of thought. He accepts a distinction between 'natural' and 'historical' time, defining the former as the quantifiable chronological time of the natural sciences, the latter as the meaningful time of which the historian seeks knowledge. And he accepts Pinder's expansion of time to a sort of 'spatial' system of coordinates; historical time and space comprise systems of reference points in which things make sense in terms of each other, but not every simultaneous moment has the same 'meaning' in the very different and incommensurate spatial and temporal systems that exist side by side. But these seeming paradoxes and complexities of nonsimultaneity are, he writes, the result of the fact that historians are actually working with two very different concepts of time (and space). 'Simultaneity' can be interpreted in two ways, as either 'natural' *or* 'historical' simultaneity. Nonsimultaneity appears or disappears depending on the arbitrary way in which a stretch of 'historical' time is defined. In any one system, the difference between natural and historical time can be reduced to zero, depending on how that spatial or temporal system is defined, and in particular by *narrowing* the system of reference. Nonsimultaneity thus disappears mathematically, becoming mere error that tends toward zero, as long as the system to be studied is defined properly. Panofsky shows this using two extreme cases of interpretation:

> [T]he first extreme is represented by two works that are as closely 'related' as imaginable, i.e. two products of the same artistic personality. Here the difference between natural and historical simultaneity can be practically ignored. The second is represented by two 'unrelated' works, for example a Negro sculpture made around 1530 and the Medici Madonna of Michelangelo, in which case the difference is so great that the natural 'simultaneity' connecting the two works becomes historically irrelevant.[54]

Thus 'nonsimultaneity' becomes a mirage created by the superimposition of two incommensurable temporal conceptions, an error that in actual fact diminishes asymptotically.

But this is far too tidy, not to say sophistic, a solution. Moreover, Panofsky has pulled a fast one: his solution appears because he has, in fact, completely changed the terms of the argument in a way that is not so apparent because the terminology remains the same. Pinder and Panofsky are both working with a distinction between 'natural' and 'historical' time, but Panofsky's 'natural' time is precisely the astronomic or chronological time that Pinder does not

consider; the 'natural' time Pinder considers is the time of *experience*. The situation can be summed up this way: Panofsky dismisses nonsimultaneity as a *philosophical* problem, seeing it as the result of 'conceptual duplicity', of a category error. And he dismisses it as an *epistemological* problem. One need only pick the 'smallest system of reference'[55] in which to situate a historical event, and the difference between the two kinds of time disappears. But by changing the terms from the phenomenological to the epistemological, by switching philosophical frames of reference from *Lebensphilosophie* to neo-Kantianism, Panofsky ignores nonsimultaneity as a problem of *experience*. He fails to register the fact that, as Pinder points out, history *feels* very different from the pictures we draw of it. Panofsky missed the subtext of the argument, that the present was *experienced* not as stability and unity but as conflict and confusion, that time unravels into strands as its weave disintegrates. Panofsky has no sense of the instability of history, the vertigo it creates, its disorienting tendency to move in one direction while one is looking in another. He has, in other words, no sense of the *modern*, or he studiously, and perhaps anxiously, avoids it. And if one shifts the terms from a phenomenology to an epistemology of history, as Panofsky does, one refuses to acknowledge the urgency, or even the possibility, of a politics of time.

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There is, I am arguing, much more to Pinder's argument than a simple fallacy. Bloch clearly thought so too, and he was certainly doing far more than simply accepting the scenario as Pinder describes it and giving it sociological coordinates as opposed to biological ones. Now I don't know that Bloch read Panofsky's article in the *Jahrbuch für Kunstwissenschaft* (in fact, I rather doubt it). What is noteworthy, however, is that he follows the same procedure as Panofsky – playing Simmel against Pinder – but comes to very different conclusions. He accepts the problem that Pinder defines – the distinction between the lived time of experience and the historical time of meaning. But he rises to the neo-Kantian challenge set by Simmel, the demand for an Archimedean point from without by which to gain a view of history as a total process, a view that would provide a ground from which to see history as something other than Pinder's meaningless agglomeration of intransitive moments. And, probably without knowing it, he stays in the game by matching the ante raised by Panofsky, who points out the epistemological trap of rejecting the presence of an objectively valid and knowable historical time to which one could relate the different subjectively experienced times.

For Pinder, there is no such thing as simultaneity beyond the generation. Panofsky sought an Archimedean point outside of formal developments from

which the possibility of historical knowledge could be saved; he found it in recourse to a forward chronological vector that merely allowed for a looser fit of chronological and historical time; he preserved the semblance, or the principle, of simultaneity. Bloch did too, but he did so in a way that preserved Pinder's insight into the agonistic nature of historical time. He finds his Archimedean point in a view of history as a totality defined by the developments of modes of production. This is, of course, an ontology, a Marxist one without which history could not be, for Bloch, the site of meaning and politics. It is a rejection of Heidegger's position laid out slightly earlier in *Sein and Zeit* in 1927, one that solves the problem of simultaneity by seeing history as a mode of existential being, one that *is* what we are instead of one that makes us what we are and which we can, in turn, make. For Bloch, in other words, there *is* an absolutely and historically defined simultaneity, that which is 'oriented exactly to the most advanced economy' and which manifests most directly the latest stage of relations of production. The state of production and the social relations corresponding to it must be defined individually and with great care (and here, occasionally, Bloch fails), but they provide the outside position from which to evaluate and know historical events.[56] Thus the economic state of the peasantry, though real, is out of sync with the development of the economy and the forces that move it; it is objectively nonsimultaneous, it is not sustainable, not, in a way, *correct*. And the state of mind of the white-collar worker, with his claims to bourgeois entitlement and demands for security, his belief in his own social superiority over those with more direct physical contact with the machinery of production, is subjectively nonsimultaneous; it is ideological, a system of beliefs emerging from an *untrue* state of affairs. This is Bloch's ontology, and it is Marxist. But though economic activity or ideological systems can be right or wrong, experience is always real, and it is the raw material of politics. It is an impressive solution. Bloch accepts the terms by which an uncritical vitalist such as Pinder poses his question, but he does not, by a philosophical short-circuit, equate experience with truth. In a way, he redeems the tradition of *Lebensphilosophie*, accepting it as a legacy. He recognises behind its tendency towards nihilism an authentic subjective response that could be used to put a wrong world right.[57]

Bloch accepts historical materialism's philosophy of history, but he allows time to expand. He does so in the wake of art history's struggle to relate form meaningfully to history, in the wake of problems that emerged as visual form mutated through time, developing logically and then stopping, reversing, or changing direction, cleaving unpredictably along fault-lines of space and time. It was in the history of art that time, as it bent and clove, became visibly spatial, but with absences and voids, faster and slower zones. For the philologist of form, time began to move in chaotic ways, ways that looked mysterious, like

LEFT Paul Schmitthenner, House in GAGFAH estate Am Fischtal, Berlin-Zehlendorf, 1928. From Hans Eckstein, *Neue Wohnbauten* (Munich, 1932).

FACING PAGE Bruno Taut, GEHAG estate, Berlin-Zehlendorf, 1926–27.

miracles, or that called forth the sternest attempts to bring it into sync and under control. For politics, time lost its forward force. It expanded and condensed into strange spaces from which time looked different, microtemporalities in which reaction could set in, where dust could turn to mould, where the future could be prevented and the present eternalised, where one could identify a pathological politics of distorted and indefinitely extended time. This was the 'multi-spatial entity' with 'unmastered and as yet by no means revealed and resolved corners', the chaotic and erratic dialectic that constituted an obligation to pursue an active politics, to do battle on very different temporal fronts simultaneously.

Styles of Nonsimultaneity

In the German architecture of the late Weimar period, the radically new, the radically 'now', was claimed by a tendency that was referred to as the *Neue Sachlichkeit* ('New Objectivity') and often referred to itself as the *Neues Bauen* ('New Architecture'). It was these architects – Walter Gropius, Bruno Taut, Ernst May, Hans Scharoun and others – who sought most programmatically and often politically to be 'fully simultaneous and oriented exactly to the most advanced economy'.[58] Stylistically, the architecture of the time can be con-

sidered in terms of a battle over the very appearance of the modern world. The front was located, by and large, in the area of domestic architecture where, in the wake of a nearly chronic housing shortage, demands were greatest.[59] And the war assumed forms that bordered on the comic. It broke out, for example, around the *Siedlungen*, or mass housing estates, built by local governments, trade unions, employee organisations, and housing societies. By means of their architecture, the client organisations made stylistic statements about their vision of the world, and these statements prompted retorts. In the most famous skirmish, hostilities broke out in the southwestern Berlin suburb of Zehlendorf, where between 1926 and 1932 Bruno Taut, Hugo Häring and Otto Rudolf Salvisberg built a large estate popularly known as 'Onkel Tom's Cabins' with the left-leaning GEHAG (Gemeinnützige Heimstätten-, Spar- und Bau-Aktiengesellschaft) organisation. Their vision of the modern was modernist, egalitarian and socialist in its delight in the serial repetition of the units of the apartment blocks; it was urban and machine-inspired in its hard-edged geometry and flat roofs; but it bore, at the same time, the bright colours of a utopian fire. The white-collar GAGFAH (Gemeinnützige Aktiengesellschaft für Angestellten-Heimstätten) organisation bought up land across the street and built a counter-estate called 'Am Fischtal' showing a predictably comfortable bourgeois future. Many of the houses were built for single families or were meant to look as if they were. Even if multiple-occupancy, they were individ-

Bruno Taut, GEHAG estate, Berlin-Zehlendorf, 1926–27. From Walter Müller-Wulckow, *Wohnbauten und Siedlungen* (Königstein i.T., 1929).

Heinrich Tessenow, Multifamily dwelling in GAGFAH estate *Am Fischtal*, Berlin-Zehlendorf, 1928–29 (photograph: author).

ualised, solid and dignified, foregrounding a handcrafted quality and a rural look with their pitched roofs. This vision of the present asserted that modern life need not represent a radical rupture with the living forms of the past but could instead be an organic development out of it; it also posited a visual organisation of residence that expressed a still capitalist and bourgeois notion of property. These were the stakes in the so-called battle of the roofs.[60]

Bloch took note of the battle of the roofs. He did not take sides at the time, and when he wrote about it in *Erbschaft dieser Zeit*, he rejected the choice as it was presented. But one thing is certain: Bloch, who accepted the imperative of the 'now', oddly enough rejected the Neues Bauen's claim of simultaneity, while Pinder, who did not accept the notion of an artistic style expressing the spirit of an age and who rejected completely the notion of the simultaneous, accepted the claims to absolute contemporaneity. Even under Nazism, it was Pinder who supported the modernist tendencies that we now associate with the left. Bloch did not. That is no scandal in itself: the association of modern architecture with the left was a complex matter, and the phenomenon of 'reactionary modernism' is well-known.[61] But it is worth exploring Bloch's and Pinder's views on the advanced architecture of their era, for they provide a test case for their views about form and historical time.

The discussion of architecture appears in *Erbschaft dieser Zeit* in a section called 'Upper Bourgeoisie, Objectivity, and Montage'. In the original edition of the book, Bloch adds the dates '1924–1933' as a subtitle. His critique of architectural modernity is not of the same incisiveness as other parts of his book, but to the extent that it is an argument, it has three points. First, Bloch separates the contemporaneity of the Neues Bauen from history by assimil-

Giuseppe Capponi, Botanical Institute, Città Universitaria, Rome, 1932–35.

ating it to another model by which form can be related to temporality: he considers it to be a mere fashion. Its modernity, like that of the city of Berlin in general, is that of the '"simultaneous" in the limited, indeed inauthentic sense, namely that of being merely up to date'.[62] It is not true *Gleichzeitigkeit* but 'inauthentic or relative simultaneity'.[63] Second, Bloch finds the Neues Bauen *unheimlich*, or uncanny. In a section titled 'New Corner Window' he writes 'This one is hardly a place for relaxation. . . . The big window does not just shed light on the quiet table, but also on the lives of those without one.'[64] The uncanniness or homelessness is, for Bloch, precisely capitalist reification. The shining surfaces of the machine aesthetic are 'nickel-plated emptiness', the objectivity of the objects is

> *rationality* taken to extremes and yet . . . remaining *abstract*; at the same time this corresponds, in its abstractness, to the latest capitalist style of thought. It corresponds to the 'capitalist planned economy' and similar anomalies with which capitalism reaches for the forms of tomorrow in order to keep those of yesterday alive. This kind of objectivity, of course, achieves, in the economy and in architecture as well as in ideology, nothing but sheer facade; behind the built-in rationalities the total anarchy of a profit economy remains. Under cover, of course, many things are stirring even here; the implements become simple and standardised, the machine produces in series, the steely rooms become absolutely practical, and if they were not so expensive, they would seem almost classless.[65]

And finally, precisely as he asserts a continuity between capitalism and fascism both in the organisation of exploitation and the irrationality of its *ratio*, Bloch

sees the fashinably modern upper-bourgeois objectivity as a perfectly appropriate style for fascism:

> Wherever there is an upturn in the business cycle, as illusion or sparked by the war industry, high Fascism too seeks renewed contact with technology and the most modern 'Ratio' in its wake. In Hitler's Germany this contact is thwarted by non-'degenerate' bourgeois conformism together with anaesthetic, or appears merely as one element among others in the tension between Goebbels and Rosenberg, flat roof and pitched roof . . . but in Mussolini's Italy precisely the 'most progressive' architecture is effective, and in general a 'cultural life' that is completely functionalist, to the point of snobbery.[66]

Thus far, Bloch has equated the illusory objectivity of the Neue Sachlichkeit in architecture and design with both capitalism and fascism. It is only logical that he should also equate it with the wrong kind of socialism (seen from the perspective of Third International Marxism, which is the audience he addresses), in other words, with social democracy. This equation of social democracy with fascism is uncomfortable to us today, yet these are perhaps the most powerful passages in his critique of architectural modernism. Bloch is certainly unfair in his dismissal of the significant efforts of committed socialist architects, but he has put his finger on a major problem of architectural style considered in an unmediated way as politics. Bloch equates the enthusiasm for modern architecture, to the extent that it remains an aesthetics in place of a politics, with left revisionism, with the mechanistic reformism of a compromised nonrevolutionary socialism. His clearest target is the Swiss art and architectural historian Sigfried Giedion, student of Wölfflin and first secretary of the CIAM (Congrès internationaux d'architecture moderne) founded in 1928. He writes disparagingly of

> social-democratic 'modernity' à la Giedion . . . [of] an architect's smugness which has definitely not grown out of politics, but out of technoidally progressive expertise and the desire for its application, but which likewise propounds, even if in other words, a kind of 'peaceful evolution of capitalism into socialism.'. . . But this seems a false directness, namely none at all; seeing a piece of a future state in every sliding window, it obviously overrates the technical-neutral and underrates the class-biased element. It overrates the neutral cleanliness, comfort of the new architecture, the origin in the factory, in technical expediency and standardised mass-produced commodity. It underrates the fact that this 'uniform hygienic living' is still in no way oriented nor can be oriented even only potentially towards a classless society, but rather towards the young, modern-feeling, tastefully clever

Bruno Taut, Taut hous, Berlin-Dahlewitz, 1926, stairway. From Walter Müller-Wulckow, *Die deutsche Wohnung der Gegenwart* (Königstein i.T., 1932).

middle classes, towards their very specific, in no way classless, let alone eternal needs. It underrates the termite character which New Objectivity sets up and underscores wherever – as in workers' and employees' estates – there is not enough money for the Babbitt environment; it underrates the representative functions which, on the other hand, modern big business creates out of its 'functionalism.'[67]

Bloch is also referring, it seems clear enough, to the work of Hans Scharoun, a prominent young architect who designed buildings such as apartment blocks for 'bachelors' and 'young married couples' as well as mass housing for estates such as Berlin's Siemensstadt.[68] Bloch's own preference was, famously, for the work of expressionist artists, for the primitive, the handmade, the ornamented, his interest less a matter of style or technique but rather the phenomenology of making and warmth of use. To discuss this aspect of Bloch's aesthetics as characterised by expressionist elements and by a romantic anti-capitalist rejection of modernity is certainly a vast over-simplification, but it captures something of his utopian aesthetics and casts light on his rejection of a cold strain of modernism.[69]

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At the high point of the Neues Bauen and the debate over the problem of generations, Pinder was invited to address the German Werkbund, the largest

FACING PAGE Luckhardt Brothers and Alfons Anker, living room, Berlin-Dahlem, 1925. From Walter Müller-Wulckow, *Wohnbauten und Siedlungen* (Königstein i.T., 1929).

RIGHT Hans Scharoun, Apartment building for bachelors and young married couples, Hohenzollerndamm, Berlin, 1930.

professional organisation of advanced architects and a broad forum for the discussion of the role of architecture in society. He was aware that architecture constituted an embattled cultural terrain, and in his address at the annual meeting in 1928, the first point he wanted to make was 'that I stand on *your* side and not the side of your opponents'.[70] The loose alliance that constituted the Neues Bauen, however, comprised only one wing of the stylistically and ideologically varied ground of advanced architecture, and Pinder makes clear that it is not so much the developing International Style of Le Corbusier, Gropius, Taut, May and Scharoun that he stood behind, but rather the more moderate modernism that accepted the challenges of modernity but sought a closer contact with tradition and thus appealed to a broader range of tastes and a less radical politics. He refers to the Stuttgart train station of Paul Bonatz, which combines a monumental Romanesque with the unornamented, stripped-down surfaces and clear geometry of more radical idioms. It seeks an architectural expression of a very modern building type, but with the mass of its unadorned stone, its symmetry and references to the classical colonnade, it preserves the representative functions of architecture, functions whose rejection by the New Objectivity struck Bloch too as problematic. It is precisely the lack of representative ambition in the architecture of the Neues Bauen, the lack of 'some surplus, something sublime, something unifying' studiously avoided by the architectural radicals that he misses.[71] Pinder accepts the new form of building, but only to the extent that its traditional functions can be preserved.

Hans Scharoun, 'Armored cruiser' apartment building, Siemensstadt, Berlin, 1929–30. From Walter Müller-Wulckow, *Wohnbauten und Siedlungen* (Königstein i.T., 1929).

To Pinder's credit, when push came to shove he stood by his principles. In the confused early months of Nazi cultural politics, it was not clear which tendencies would be supported, which style or styles would be claimed by the regime to represent and legitimate its rule. Propaganda minister Joseph Goebbels leaned toward a modernist and even expressionist cultural face for the Third Reich; Alfred Rosenberg, the architect Paul Schultze-Naumburg and others stood behind the *völkisch* aesthetic most commonly associated with Nazism. Stylistically (though not institutionally) the complex battle was largely won by the latter tendency, though the prominence that modern idioms could obtain in certain cultural spheres has recently become clear.[72]

Pinder took his stand in a prominent lecture before the Pedagogic-Psychological Institute of the University of Munich in August 1933 entitled 'Art in the New German State'. Like Walter Gropius, Ludwig Mies van der Rohe, Hugo Häring and others who sought to reconcile their modernism with national socialism, Pinder saw how very urgent the issue was, saw the fact that the battle over the historical face of the modern world would be decided by one person, at one moment, and very soon: 'Both Dr. Goebbels and Alfred Rosenberg have indicated that discussion would be beneficial. It has been in progress for a few weeks.'[73] Unlike the architects, however, he was much more concerned to establish his ideological credentials: 'I can see and identify my political opponents. Liberalism and Bolshevism: these are my natural adversaries of yesterday, today and tomorrow, and I must oppose them as a good soldier of our current state.'[74] He argues, though, against too close an association of artistic and political tendency: 'If a man works in secret for the Red Front, then he is a Communist and an enemy of the State, there's no question about that. But if someone paints a landscape differently from another, then it is simply too easy to say "That man's a bolshevist."'[75]

Paul Bonatz, Railway station, Stuttgart, 1914–21. From Walter Müller-Wulckow, *Bauten der Arbeit und des Verkehrs*, 2nd ed. (Königstein i.T., 1929)

Like Bloch, Pinder points to the fact that Italy, Germany's ally in fascism, had welcomed architectural modernism in representative state commissions, while Stalin's Soviet Union had suppressed abstraction, expressionism and Neue Sachlichkeit, precisely the tendencies commonly termed 'degenerate' by the majority of the German right. And he points to the reception of this tendency in Italy as specifically German: 'the new European style, which is certainly not yet mature . . . but is nonetheless the expression of our own era! This style has been developed especially in Germany, and the Italian of today speaks . . . admiringly of the "nuovo stile tedesco," the new *German* style!'[76] This style – 'let us call it for short, if not completely accurately, "Bauhaus-style" '[77] – is, for Pinder, as yet incomplete, but it is a style he describes in the traditional terms of the visual expression of a unifying spirit: 'Styles represent a unified direction of *life*. *Community* stamps the styles. We however are only on the *path* to a new community.'[78] The style will express the spirit of the age: 'the grand task [is] *to find the beat of the historical moment*.'[79] Thus the style of that modern moment, the moment of the new community, will be resolutely modern:

> I don't have the right to say what this new style will be, a style which cannot yet exist. But it will be *contemporaneous* [*Zeiteigen*], it will not be Biedermeier, Baroque, Classical. It will, on the other hand, be similar in the binding, organizing power of these last, great, living styles. . . . And I believe that the modern architectural style, so often scorned as 'bolshevist', which has at least brought a contemporaneous element, if not a monumental one – this style will provide the *raw material*.[80]

Pinder's defense of architectural modernism and modernists follows a strategy similar to that of the practitioners themselves. Hugo Häring, in close collaboration with Gropius, wrote the following in the winter of 1933–34:

> Abroad it was acknowledged that a new style was in formation, and they called this new style the German style, the *stylo tedesco*. We had succeeded in achieving what had been sought in vain for the last 150 years: to create a German style. And we succeeded by following a path different from those before us: the path of a new artistic principle [*Gestaltungsprinzip*] and not the path of tradition, the path of reviving Mediterranean forms and their principles. . . . The Neues Bauen movement does not seek only to 'awaken'; it seeks to create anew and seeks to do so from new artistic principles that it takes to be the essence of German characteristics and a German will to culture.[81]

This strategy consisted of stressing the necessity of contemporaneity while showing a willingness to force the stylistic evolution away from forms that were too closely associated in some people's minds with socialism. Consider also Gropius's competition entry for the new Reichsbank building of 1933, where he returns to the static symmetry and classicising rhythms that defined his last project of the previous German empire, the Model Factory at the 1914 Werkbund exhibition in Cologne. His project represents a change toward a greater monumentality, one with which the new regime could identify and one that did not involve too many *stylistic* compromises on the part of the architect.

In his desire to make a cultural impact while speaking a language that corresponded to the political expediencies of the moment, in his desire to find the beat of the moment and to march with it, Pinder jettisoned his own critique of the art-historical concept of style. And in doing so, he took a huge step backward: by the 1920s, both the Rieglian notion of form directly reflecting the state of mind of an age and the Wölfflinian sense of an unmediated indication of a historical time's mode of perception had already lost their relatively recent currency and were widely subjected to critique in what was termed, even then, a crisis of the discipline.[82] Pinder knew quite well that ages didn't have a single spirit and that any equation of form and mind at all was questionable. It was, shamefully and ironically, his own early attempt at *Gleichschaltung* – the Nazi phrase for the attempt to bring all of a society into line, to synchronise it according to the imperatives of a totalitarian regime, to bring it into a unified time and beat – that caused Pinder to fall into the trap of a nonsimultaneous concept of artistic form. In a moment of blindness, willful or not, he failed to see both the absurdity of trying to define the appearance of the 'now' and the very real violence involved in the task of synchronising a modern industrial society, of cleaning out its corners and bringing the chaotic space of time into line. He failed to realise that time could not be *gleichgeschaltet*, or synchronised, and that any attempt to do so would result in a set of petrified, forcibly checked temporalities in which dust and cobwebs would grind the energies leading out of them to a dangerous halt.[83]

Walter Gropius, Competition entry for the Reichsbank building, Berlin, perspective, front entrance, 1933. Courtesy of the Busch-Reisinger Museum, Harvard University Art Museums, gift of Walter Gropius.

Marlite Halbertsma has pointed out that Pinder's theory of generations had little or no effect upon the art-historical discussions of the time, that it was, with its outdated sense of form and its grand attempt at a total theory, itself nonsimultaneous.[84] Ambitious young scholars, such as Panofsky (born 1892), Hans Sedlmayr (1896), or Otto Pächt (1902), had no use for the theory of a man, born 1878, who was professionally at the height of his career but intellectually, perhaps, a 'has-been'. Yet by the time of the Third Reich, Bloch, born 1885, was pushing fifty himself. He did not share Pinder's politics, and he did not share his idealism, but he did share certain habits of thought with the art historian. Both were accustomed to thinking about history philosophically and systematically; both accepted that art had to be studied in terms of a history of art (*Kunstgeschichte*) and not a science (*Kunstwissenschaft*), as the new generation tended to assert; both were sensitive to the philosophical problems of lived experience. Bloch, in other words, could grasp that the problem Pinder laid out was an important one, one that merited serious attention.[85] Bloch and Pinder shared, one could say, similar generational styles of thought, styles that accepted certain problems however much their solutions differed.

But Bloch, needless to say, had a very different view of a style of national socialism. As he described it, it was less a formal idiom than a signifying strategy that mobilised and manipulated styles politically. Like Pinder, he accepted that in the twentieth century, 'one can *choose* . . . styles, one can label styles *politically*'.[86] And Bloch realised that in the face of the nonsimultaneity of the simultaneous that Pinder described, the Nazis were doing just that. Out of an outdated problematic, Bloch develops a very modern sense of styles as signs

that functioned semiotically as a cultural currency, that were circulated, traded, embattled and stolen. In *Erbschaft dieser Zeit*, he describes how the reaction had stolen the dreams, insignia and signs of the revolution, calling it 'brown theft':

> So they stole the red flag, putting in the Aryan symbol; stole the marches . . . the music of the songs, made a few crude changes. . . . Stole the word 'worker' and 'worker's party' with as much cunning ignorance as suggestion; and precisely here they let loose a fog in which no one knows anymore who's the guest and who's the waiter, in which one is 'redeemed' from class conflict between 'workers of the head and of the fist' by a 'universal working class' and their even hazier clichés; they put up posters about a 'socialist folk-community' between a productive Capital and those who have none, but are at least productive. Finally they stole the Russian relation of theory and praxis, though in such a way that they confuse it with the mere relation of theory and propaganda. . . . But certainly the theft of red means for reversed purposes has the seeds of its own revenge within it. Certainly one cannot in the long run use revolutionary forms on anticapitalist masses . . . for the defense and support of capitalism. Certainly time works even in non-simultaneous levels – if not for proletarian socialism, at least against the immense fraud of Fascism, against the people's irrational hopes that the problem of economic crises can, just as irrationally, be solved on the basis of capitalism. But as fleeting as this last Nazi-grotesque is, so fantastical its anti-reality: it contains the lesson that emblems must not remain undefended, and especially that things truly central to the revolution must not be left unoccupied. Communism stands in a particular position with regard to these central things and the way they have, admittedly, been 'seduced': that of being able to 'inherit' *its own earlier property*.[87]

Nazi cultural politics represented the theft of communism's rightful inheritance.

Any attempt to trace Bloch's inspirations, the elements of notions he combined into concepts and concepts he combined into theories, meets the resistance of Bloch's own desire to leave them in the dark. He divides concepts from the words that designate them; he separates parts of theories and deploys them far from each other in his own system; he does not like the footnote and the way it maps out systems of intellectual exchange. One wonders why. His use of the contemporary concept of nonsimultaneity, shifted from the hermeneutical to the sociological to the political arena, involved the sort of work of which scholars engaged in a more traditional sort of exchange might have been proud. For whatever reason, Bloch preferred to play the prophet, to

Ferdinand Kramer, Study in a studio apartment, Frankfurt am Main, 1927. From Walter Müller-Wulckow, *Die deutsche Wohnung der Gegenwart* (Königstein i.T., 1932).

emerge from the mountains, from the Alps, from exile in Switzerland, with a message *ex dei* or *ex nihilo*. And this is a pity, for the history of the notion of nonsimultaneity shows that Bloch practised exactly what he preached. He dusted off an idea seen by most as old and rusty, even politically suspect, something they left unattended and unwanted. Bloch took it and reused it; he knew just how. One could call it red theft.

Politics of Nonsimultaneity

More light!

– Goethe's last words

Bloch would have recognised that metaphors of time represent a well-worked terrain. For Goethe, time turned to space. It was a field, one to be surveyed, one to be worked with care so that it would yield a good harvest in the present and be a proper legacy for future generations. Every moment, every instant, he told Eckermann, is of infinite value because it contains within it all of eternity.[88] This is what literary historian Fritz Strich called in 1928 the classic sense of time.[89] For the romantics, however, no moment is complete. The moment, the instant, the time of the blink of an eye eludes one's grasp, dissolving into past and future. They sought to unite past and future within the present, but time resisted; reality remained infinitely extended in time.[90]

At the same time, writes Strich, time becomes politicised: 'The new experience of time opened a new temporal dimension to poetry: the simultaneous, the side-by-side. Thus the social problem moves to the centre of poetry and creates for it a sort of social form.'[91] For Heine and the Young Germany, this synthesis that was the object of longing, the synthesis in which opposites could be reconciled in the realised moment, was termed the 'Third Reich.'[92] The Third Reich as it was proclaimed sought to bring time into line and extend it indefinitely: the mythical thousand years.

When the Third Reich descended with its twelve chronological years of darkness, Walter Benjamin described the historical moment and its politics differently. 'History,' he wrote, 'is the subject of a structure whose site is not homogeneous, empty time, but time filled by the presence of the now.'[93] The historical moment is the 'moment of danger', a moment when the chronological 'now' has to be reunited with the 'now' of the historical moment that is 'seized' as it 'flashes up' briefly. This could only happen with one's eyes wide open; one could not blink. Recall that Benjamin's objection to *Erbschaft dieser Zeit* concerned not content but timing: Bloch, he implied, had missed the

moment of danger; the historical instant had passed. The catalogue of communism's cultural legacy came not pre-posthumously but post-mortem. Of course, Benjamin's own timing was no better. He was slower than Bloch to formulate a political response to fascism; he articulated his support of soviet modernism as its representatives were disappearing into the Gulag. His sense of the politics of culture, we have seen, was similarly out of sync.

Bloch too had a metaphor for the moment. In his debut in *Geist der Utopie* and till the end of his days, he spoke of the 'darkness of the lived moment':

> Now I cannot experience and hold my self. Not even that I am smoking now, writing; precisely this is too close, will not stand before me.
>
> Only immediately afterwards can I calmly hold such things before me, turn them around in front of me, so to speak. Thus only the immediately past is present for me, corresponding to what we, seemingly being there, experience.[94]

As for the romantics, the 'problem of the radically New' disappears into infinity as the problem of 'God'.[95] The situation is one that Bloch describes in *Geist der Utopie* as follows: 'We have no organ for the "I" or the "we". Instead, we stand ourselves in the blind spot, in the darkness of the lived moment [*im Dunkel des gelebten Augenblicks*].'[96] Fifty years later, he expanded on his use of this familiar concept from physiological optics: 'This darkness can be explained by the blind spot in our eye at the point where the optic nerve enters the retina and where we cannot see. Only when the point of the blind spot has been passed do we see the pencil point again as it goes by.'[97]

History, for Bloch, happens in the dark, in the blind spot. One can never see the flash of light that marks the moment of danger, the moment of action, the moment at which one can recognise simultaneously the 'now' of the present and the charged 'now' of the past. A political optics of history has to be binocular, with one eye fixed on the present, the other on the past. The present provides the Archimedean point from which to know history in a way that allows one to act. Yet the present nonetheless falls into the blind spot. Though he fell victim to it time and again, Benjamin understood this fundamental problem of epistemology and of politics. From the notes that constitute the Arcades Project:

> The Copernican revolution in the conception of history is this: the 'past' has been considered the fixed point, the task of the present as that of leading knowledge carefully and hesitantly to this firm ground. Now this relation should be reversed, and the past made into a dialectical fulcrum, to a thought of the awakened consciousness. Politics assumes primacy over history. The facts become something that strikes us now; to determine them becomes a

> matter of memory [*der Erinnerung*]. And in fact, awakening is the exemplary case of memory. . . . What Proust means by the experimental rearrangement of furniture in the half-sleep of the morning, what Bloch recognizes as the darkness of the lived moment, is nothing but that which is to be secured here at the level of the historical and collective.[98]

Why, then, Benjamin's sour response to Bloch's book? Perhaps because, as if due to bad conscience, Bloch did not bring up the issue of the darkness of the lived moment in *Erbschaft dieser Zeit*, precisely when the moment was at its darkest. Instead he implied a visible and illuminated present in his title, and he dated many sections of the book with the pre-1933 dates of their drafting or conception, as if to argue for their early rather than late arrival.[99] In a letter to Benjamin, who, he assumed, had already received *Erbschaft dieser Zeit*, Bloch excused himself by mysterious reference to an allegedly already completed book that may never have seen the light of day:

> There is not a word in this book about our common problems. . . . They are not a part of the 'content of the time' that is discussed here. That is another field of time and the field of another time. Therefore in the preface I refer clearly enough to a second book, which, although also completed, could not be linked to this one for both material and publishing reasons.[100]

Bloch's Goethean image, the 'field of time', implies an anachronistically classical ability to make time stand still for long enough to work the ground with care and caution. In any case, Bloch seems to suggest his own prophetic ability to think simultaneously in an expanded moment, however dark, when he, more than anyone else, knew better.

MIMESIS

PHYSIOGNOMIES OF ART IN KRACAUER, SEDLMAYR, BENJAMIN AND ADORNO

> *. . . the really important historians of the nineteenth century such as Riegl, Dilthey and Dvořák . . .*
>
> – Georg Lukács, 'Reification and the Consciousness of the Proletariat'[1]

Kracauer and Riegl: The Problem

Let us begin by looking again at a founding text of critical theory, one that thematises, as I have sought to do in this book, the challenge of thinking modernity through its visual products and models. It is Siegfried Kracauer's 'Mass Ornament', an essay of 1927 which has been well known since its republication in 1963 and its translation into English in 1975 but which has not, for that, been grasped fully in its complexity. I would like to read it here against the grain, by which I mean for its resistances and contradictions, indeed for its ironies, for the places where its argument takes surprising turns, finds its limits, traps its readers. For I think that these limits, the problems that Kracauer faced, are closely tied to what Kracauer has to say about the challenges of a visual reading of modernity.

The subject of the essay is a fad of the 1920s in the realm of trivial commercialised entertainment – a realm of culture that Kracauer was among the first to take seriously. They were the groups of 'Girl' troops exemplified by the Tiller Girls, dancers whose limbs moved in perfect tandem and with military precision, producing the ornamental patterns that might more easily be associated with Busby Berkeley musicals. His interest lies in their very triviality, the fact that they were not taken seriously by traditional producers of culture, not meant to appeal to an educated audience who would attach to them values, world-views or meanings of an intellectual sort. Such shows, staples of what Kracauer called the 'pleasure barracks'[2] frequented by the 'new middle class' of shop assistants and white-collar workers, appealed to an unreflective audience that found a spontaneous and resolutely untheorised pleasure in the

wonder of bodies turned into ever new constellations of abstract form before them. 'The position that an epoch occupies in the historical process,' writes Kracauer, explaining his interest,

> can be determined more strikingly from an analysis of its inconspicuous surface-level expressions than from that epoch's judgments about itself. These judgments are expressions of tendencies of the particular era and do not offer conclusive testimony about its overall constitution. The surface-level expressions, however, by virtue of their unconscious nature, provide unmediated access to the fundamental content of the state of things. Knowledge of that state is conversely tied to an interpretation of these surface-level expressions. The content of an epoch and its spontaneous impulses illuminate each other reciprocally.[3]

For Gertrud Koch, this represents Kracauer's 'epistemological manifesto',[4] and most other commentators have concurred. They concur too in the way they characterise this epistemology: many refer to it as a 'physiognomic' approach. Yet as much as Kracauer is interested in the way the dancing bodies express the 'epoch' – 1920s modernity – he is hardly interested in any sort of physiognomic theory of the kind that we would recognise (and which, as shall become clear, were very current at the time). Physiognomy posits and seeks to trace the organic intertwining of body and character, the mutual dependence of the psyche and flesh which share the same life. To the extent that they are not simply occult, physiognomic approaches are concerned precisely with the mediation between the two poles of body and soul; they might invoke theories of bodily humours, statistical evidence correlating body type and psychopathology, the clear evidence of character left in handwriting, the unguarded expressiveness of gestures.

Kracauer wanted nothing to do with this kind of knowledge that might be considered disreputable, the vestiges of outmoded science, the province of charlatans. And instead of letting this characterisation of a 'physiognomic' approach stand as figurative, I would prefer to characterise the description of the mass ornament more precisely. For we have a good enough sense of what conceptual tools were available to Kracauer. He was trained at university as an architect, wrote a doctoral dissertation on the decorative arts, and was very aware of developments in art historiography.[5] He was also a student of Georg Simmel at precisely the time when the philosopher was in close contact with the reform movement in the applied arts, with the art historian Heinrich Wölfflin, and absorbing the lessons of Alois Riegl.[6] And Kracauer's model of the mass ornament is undeniably one we recognise from Riegl and Wölfflin.

In the first two decades of the twentieth century, Riegl stood, along with Wölfflin, for the new configuration of idealism, historicism and formalism that

gave the history of art the intellectual conviction and flexibility to make it a *Geisteswissenschaft* on a par with the study of history or literature. It was they who gave a theoretical rigour to the romantic anti-capitalist notion of style that saw cultures of the past as spiritually unified. Their radical historicism underwrote a value-free approach to the art of the past, the mutability of artistic style connoting differing positions in the universal history of man instead of variations of quality or skill. Their idealism posited a direct relation between all human activity and a unified spiritual substance that pervaded the products of a culture. In an example of what Althusser called 'expressive causality', the essence of a collectivity was seen as a certain mindset or 'spirit', that pervaded all manifestations of a society. And their formalism posited abstract artistic form – in Riegl's words, 'colour and line on the plane and in space' – as fully and autonomously revealing this spirit and thus, conversely, adequate for the study of the culture of a period.

For such an agenda, the limit-point of analysis would be the project of finding the key to a culture, its spiritual principle, in abstract, anonymous and incidental visual production: finding the spirit of the gothic in the point of a shoe. The less reflected the product, the more purely the essence of a culture is expressed. This was Wölfflin's point when he wrote that the 'heartbeat of the age' could be most easily seen in 'the small decorative arts, in the lines of ornament, in lettering. Here, the feeling for form satisfies itself in the purest way, and it is here that the birthplace of a new style must be sought.'[7] And this was Riegl's project in the tracing of the *Kunstwollen* in the mutation of visual form, following the formative principle, the historical *Wollen*, as it achieved its pure expression in form utterly unburdened by literary content or manifest subject matter: 'The clearest case is architecture, next to the applied arts, particularly when they do not incorporate figurative motives: often architecture and these applied arts reveal the basic laws of the *Kunstwollen* with an almost mathematical clarity.'[8]

This is familiar territory in the historiography of art, and it would have been thoroughly familiar to Kracauer as well, long before he wrote 'The Mass Ornament'. His quest to read a culture out of incidental, vernacular, anonymous, even debased production, his refusal to privilege the masters or masterpieces, his focus on the margins of culture as a way of locating its essence – all this was the invocation of a relatively standard art-historical paradigm. Kracauer's polemic edge comes from his intention to try out the tools of serious scholarly analysis in the least likely area of his present-day mass culture. Of course, in his close attention to the surface of everyday life, to ornament and to the everyday, Kracauer's reading of commercial culture is Simmelian in spirit. Yet Simmel's analysis of ornament was, as Kracauer knew well,[9] less the deep reading of hermeneutics than a distant overview of its shifting semiotics.

ABOVE Border of a Klazomenian sarcophagus. From A. Riegl, *Stilfragen* (1892; Berlin, 1923).

FACING PAGE The Tiller Girls. From E. Bucher, *Film-Fotos wie noch nie* (Gießen, 1929).

Simmel read ornament as arbitrary, though as no less significant for that. Kracauer wants instead to read content, indeed the 'basic content of an era', in form, not merely its manipulation as sign.

'The Mass Ornament' begins in what could be described as an unabashedly Rieglian vein, with abstract form as a cipher for the central principle of a social totality that can be characterised through it. He goes on to consider the dance in past eras – which would establish a trajectory to the Tiller Girls of Taylorised Germany – but in his insistent use of the term 'ornament' keeps the discussion in this art-historical terrain. '[W]henever a people [*Volk*] makes forms, such figures do not float freely but grow out of a community [*Gemeinschaft*]. A current of organic life surges from these communal groups – which share a common destiny – to their ornaments, which appear as produced by magical force and laden with meaning that cannot be reduced to a mere pattern of lines.'[10] The ornaments emerge from the 'immanent consciousness' of those who create them;[11] forms that do not originate in this consciousness are incomplete and not transcendent.[12]

Yet having established this ground that looks so familiar, having positioned his educated readership in the comfortably idealist realm of polite art appreciation and evening lectures, Kracauer veers off sharply from this Rieglian or

Cyrenean kylix. From A. Riegl, *Stilfragen* (1892; Berlin, 1923)

Wölfflinian approach. He does not follow his own plan; he does not seek to show how, in the present, culture could be read directly in incidental form. Rather than a lesson in the hermeneutics of visual form, he uses the mass ornament to posit the arrival of a post-hermeneutic age, employing the postulate of the unmediated interrelatedness of all aspects of a culture to show that it *no longer obtained*. His reading is no longer direct but instead highly mediated: since there is no more community, he writes, there is no more spirit in ornament. In the case of the Girl troops, 'the bearer of the ornaments is the *mass* and not the *people* [*Volk*]'. If earlier form emerged from 'organic life', 'the patterns seen in the stadiums and cabarets betray no such origins. They are composed of elements that are merely building blocks and nothing more . . . It is the mass that is employed here'.[13] The mass ornament 'does not emerge out of the interior of the given conditions, but rather appears above them'; 'the proliferations of organic forms and the emanations of the life of the soul are lost'.[14] The dancers, the elements of the mass ornament, are not part of a whole community but fragments of an alienated mass.

This is not typical patrician cultural criticism or a romantic anti-capitalist condemnation of mass culture. Kracauer is ambivalent, asserting that the aesthetic interest of the mass ornament, as a reflection of the state of culture, is perfectly legitimate (and this is not the first time Kracauer warned his *Frankfurter Zeitung* readership that traditional forms of high culture served mainly as a refuge for anachronistic cultural values).[15] But even in the absence of spiritual values as the guarantor of authenticity, the cabaret and stadium performances can be used to read society. The dancers, he writes, are not individuals that contain within themselves the whole and give it expression; they are mere elements, interchangeable. The ornament does not come from them but occurs above them. The spiritual bond between producer and product, the hermeneutic hinge of the *Geisteswissenschaften*, is broken: their activity does not give them a sense of totality, access to the whole. They cannot see the manifestation of society of which they are a part; that whole can only be perceived passively and at a distance. The mass ornament is not a means by which to fulfil the human goal of expression, but an end in itself.

As a rational ordering of human subjects, but one in which the elements have no investment and from which they are alienated, Kracauer reads the mass ornament as a cipher of capitalism. And from this sympathetic but incisive reading, he goes on to outline a philosophy of history in which rationality, from serving man and overcoming superstition, comes to exist independently and to subordinate its human subjects. In this post-hermeneutic situation, reason is no longer a means by which to achieve certain valued ends, but a value autonomously. The result is a steady demystification of the world and a rational economic system in which reason has become 'murky' because 'it does

Sandro Botticelli, Primavera, *c.*1480, detail, The Three Graces, from Heinrich Wölfflin, *Die klassische Kunst*, forth edition (Munich, 1908).

not encompasses man'.[16] Without drawing attention to the fact, Kracauer has shifted his terms here from the easy idealism of Riegl and Wölfflin to the incompatibly bitter and pessimistic analyses of Max Weber and Georg Lukács; at the same time he has pushed the critique of rationalisation and reification into a philosophy of history that forms the core of Horkheimer and Adorno's later *Dialectic of Enlightenment*.

'The Mass Ornament' is, famously, a tour de force, a philosophy of history that begins in the cabaret and convincingly encompasses the entire history of abstract reason. But read backwards against its own explicitly Rieglian starting point, a fundamental and certainly intentional contradiction emerges. Kracauer reads history (indeed, a philosophy of history) out of ornament, which is based on spirit and communal forms, at the same time as he shows the *lack* of spirit and thus the *impossibility* of continuing to use the model in the present. Having rehearsed rather pious principles of thinking about form, he goes on to assert that the conditions under which they could apply no longer obtain – and then defies reason by setting out on one last, grand Rieglian reading of ornament despite it all. The quirky logic of 'The Mass Ornament' has been noted before, and one recent commentator has asked if the 'detour' over the 'surface phenomena of everyday life' is really necessary.[17] Certainly Kracauer drops the

hermeneutical point with which he starts; he gives no instructions, no indication of how his 'epistemological manifesto' could ever be put to use again. Kracauer continued to look closely at the surfaces of social life, to seek out 'exemplary instances of modernity' in city maps, street façades and cinemas. He approached them, however, in an inductive, Simmelian way, phenomenologically sensitive and always attuned to complex mediations. He never again sought 'unmediated access to the fundamental content of the state of things'.

But perhaps the 'detour' across abstract forms that speak directly one last time, a swan song of idealist history, was necessary after all. It is as if Kracauer can see the end of any romantic anti-capitalist faith in the art-historical approach to style and wrings what is left out of it, leaving it exhausted and empty. He holds the Tiller Girls up before us for a last, impossible and certainly ironic reading of history from ornament. If we can read spirit out of form, he seems to be saying, then all we can see is that there is no such spirit left in our cultural products. Alternatively, he could be seen to be saying that 'our position in the historical process', that of advanced capitalism, has revealed the fallacy of a direct reading of history from form. Either way, Kracauer announces the bankruptcy of a hermeneutic reading of form.

This reading of 'The Mass Ornament' is not meant to exhaust the text, nor is it meant to do anything but supplement previous analyses of it. But I think we can say that Kracauer was on the one hand applying a model from contemporary art historiography, and on the other, showing that such a model was simply no longer adequate to the conditions faced in the 1920s, in an industrialised modernity where leisure and culture were closely tied to larger production in a new way, indeed as a part of it. It is, in other words, a critique of that art historiography. That should not surprise us. The fundamental work of Riegl and Wölfflin was, by the 1920s, a generation old. If much attention has been paid to the fascination exerted by this line of thought in the inter-war period, it is worth bearing in mind that these ideas were considered, in advanced circles, deeply problematic and even out of date. Lukács certainly knew what he was doing when he relegated Riegl, along with Dilthey and Dvořák, to the nineteenth century, for these were not thinkers of modernity in any but a negative sense: the most powerful elements of this thought rendered modernity precisely invisible. Kracauer's reading of the mass, like Benjamin's reading of Baudelaire, takes another tack. He borrows the remnants of sanctioned bourgeois thought and turns them inside out, deploying them in order to proclaim, indeed prove, their very impossibility.

*

We are more closely bound to the invisible than to the visible.

– Novalis

In order to look at the relation between critical theory and other discourses of the visual, we need to recognise the specificity and the complexity of the human sciences in the 1920s, the sense of transition that pervaded them and the rapid pace at which models were being tried and traded. Yet surveying that intellectual field presents difficulties as few of the experiments there developed in a smooth or linear way. Nazism, exile and war created a deep caesura in the human sciences, as lines of thought were broken, as scholarly careers were extinguished or took new directions, as schools of thought were compromised by their closeness to regimes or their rhetorics. The result is that this field of thought looks very unfamiliar today; that ideas already considered outmoded then have, paradoxically, greater currency now; and that the debates from which concepts of the critical theorists emerged remain strangely invisible.

Indeed, the way in which Kracauer's ambivalence with regard to a society described as an alienated mass was intertwined with his ambivalence towards his own epistemology is symptomatic of a larger intellectual phenomenon whose impact on theories of the visual in the 1920s has not been adequately assessed. Kracauer's essay is a striking, if idiosyncratic, example of the so-called 'crisis of historicism'. The term was coined by the historian Karl Heussi, who published a book of that name in 1932 describing the widespread and general loss of faith, in the wake of the First World War, in the possibility of the objective study of the historical past. The war certainly had much to do with an epistemological uncertainty among thinkers about history. As Heussi points out, the war experience had taught, if nothing else, that 'in many cases, information and real knowledge bear no relation to each other'.[18] And with the rapid rethinking of ways of describing social relations, from nation to class, from victor to vanquished, meaning was drained out of history as meaning drained out of the collectivity. But this local crisis of knowledge was a symptom of more than the war. The thought of the German Historical School, from Herder through Ranke and Dilthey to Troeltsch, was predicated on the assumption that 'the subject matter of history' had, as Georg Iggers writes, 'real existence and structure', existence that was human and shared. This faith could no longer be sustained, and certainly not assumed.[19] 'Crisis' or not, the constellation of the historically relativist focus on the unity and individuality of historical cultures and the neo-Kantian assertion that valid knowledge of them could be gained no longer had a convincing basis in the experience of modernity, nor was it philosophically strong enough in itself to weather such doubt.

It is worth looking in some detail at the form the 'crisis of historicism' took in the historiography of art for two reasons. First, its profound impact on the historiography of art in the 1920s has not been considered in the growing literature on the topic. The battle fronts that structured the intellectual field, the incompatibility of different approaches, the many dead ends and the occasional intellectual and ideological excesses of scholars working there cannot be understood in any other way. Second, the critical theorists were well aware of what was happening in the scholarly study of art at the same time as their attempts to move beyond the shaky historicism of art history's founding moment were paralleled within the academy. The attempts to think the modern visually, and to use the experience of modernity to think about form in the historical past, here too ran in tandem. It is the reconstitution of the field of thought shared by the critical theorists and art historians in the wake of the crisis of historicism that is the goal of this chapter. The terrain is full of obstacles, and routes through it take many detours. This chapter will begin with the consideration of exemplary work in the history of art before turning to Benjamin's and Adorno's aesthetics, pausing as is necessary to look at developments in film, linguistics, psychology and philosophy that interested or impinged upon the works of these thinkers of the visual.

Panofsky and Sedlmayr: The Options

Despite the huge number of publications and what Christopher Wood has called the 'new self-regard of the discipline', the historiography of art found itself at an impasse in the 1920s.[20] Most of the ambitious methodological thinking of the time was occupied with trying to come to terms with the situation inherited from the first generation of Riegl, Schmarsow, Dvořák and Wölfflin – to gauge whether their tools and concepts were adequate and what difficulties they had themselves created. The most ambitious art historians to emerge in the 1920s – and for me they are without doubt Erwin Panofsky and Hans Sedlmayr – thus began their careers with major statements about the earlier major statements. Other methodological work at the time shows that this was the norm and is indicative of the state of the discipline at the time. At one extreme is Walter Passarge's oft-cited but unfortunately unread *Die Philosophie der Kunstgeschichte in der Gegenwart*. It is a book that states, in ninety-seven crystal-clear pages, the prevailing positions on major issues ('Art History as the History of Form', 'The Problem of Basic Principles', 'Art and World-View', 'Art History as *Geistesgeschichte*'). It proceeds to outline the critiques, and then criticises the critiques.[21] The most lucid and balanced exposition of methodological thought of the time finds no way out of the positions that prevailed;

Hans Sedlmayr (1896–1984). Photograph courtesy Prof. Dr. Heinrich Dilly, Halle.

it rotates around the same set issues. At the other extreme is Paul Frankl's equally often cited and utterly unreadable *System der Kunstwissenschaft*, which takes an alternative approach to a field trapped in concepts as irreplaceable as they were unsatisfactory, a situation one could describe as early decadence or Alexandrianism. It is additive and systematic instead of analytical and inductive. In over 1044 pages it outlines a huge variety of issues to be considered, grounds them philosophically and orders them systematically (for example, 'B.1. Meaning in zero dimensions [Physiognomy]; B.2. Meaning in one dimension [Kinetognomy]; B.3. Meaning in two dimensions [Noognomy]; B.4. Meaning in three dimensions [Symbol mimicry]').[22]

Riegl and his notion of the *Kunstwollen* can be used as a way of identifying the problems in the discipline after the major statements that ended with Wölfflin's *Principles*: that, in any case, is one of the chief sites over which the differing positions in the 1920s and 1930s were staked out. The problems Riegl left behind were both manifest and manifold. Riegl's combination of idealism, historicism and formalism, of course, asserted that form revealed the historical state of spirit or culture. The terminology with which this is discussed, the formal qualities invoked, the specific conclusions reached by Riegl have all been analysed in great detail in recent literature; what I would like to do instead, briefly and somewhat crudely, is simply outline the nature of the broad epistemological problems in his work that art historians had to face.

The first major problem in the Rieglian model concerns the assertion of the parallelism of various manifestations of 'spirit', of the various '*Wollen*'. Nowhere does Riegl adjudicate between the view that artistic form was an expression of extra-artistic forces (the general spirit or volition of an age, as reflected in its art) or whether it developed out of its own immanent dynamic (a separate volition of form that has its own logic). The second problem was precisely *how* spirit was expressed in form. In his *Late Roman Art Industry* Riegl had sketched out an evolution from 'haptic' to 'optic' modes of vision and the organisation of vision, but there was a consensus that the Herbartian optical theory on which this was based was outdated. Wölfflin's attempt to find 'principles' (*Grundbegriffe*) by which changing modes of vision could be described was not, by and large, accepted: most historians found them useful but empirical tools, not the sort of *a priori* universal categories by which images of all kinds could be analysed. And even if one accepted that spirit or mind was expressed directly in form, a third question remained: how could the historian read or interpret this spirit? The German Historical School asserted the utter individuality and incommensurability of various cultures. In the absence of universal norms and values, the only way to achieve knowledge of other cultures was by the imaginative leap of empathy, the project of understanding a culture from within. Historicist thought posited a radical distinction between the kinds of knowledge in the natural sciences or *Naturwissenschaften*, the model of which was mechanics, and whose objects could be *known* (*Erkennen*); and the human sciences or *Geisteswissenschaften*, for which there are no norms, only values, knowledge of human subjects that cannot be known but only *understood* (*Verstehen*). The prevailing neo-Kantianism in university philosophy sought to bring this potentially chaotic state of affairs under control by asserting, on the basis of the general validity of the subject/object distinction and the impossibility of knowing anything but the phenomenal world, that there was no fundamental distinction between spirit and nature, simply a different kind of explanation – different but equally subject to rational debate. (Wilhelm Windelband famously proposed the category of 'nomothetic' or lawlike explanations for the natural sciences and 'ideographic' or individually descriptive explanations for the historical sciences.[23]) Yet neo-Kantianism, despite a flurry of terminology, failed adequately to describe norms of knowledge for the human sciences.

Panofsky's attempt to recoup the Rieglian notion of form was one of the boldest. Outlined in his 1920 essay 'The Concept of *Kunstwollen*'[24] and elaborated over the decade in others, Panofsky's solution was neo-Kantian, and it was nothing if not elegant. The *Kunstwollen* must not be conceived as anything magical, with its own expressive force that inexplicably takes form in art. Instead, the *Kunstwollen* can simply be construed as the particular form in which fundamental and *a priori* problems of artistic representation are solved

at a given point in history, and the various solutions to these historically constant problems reflect the relation of man to his world. The history of art is the history of the solutions to the problem presented by representation in the media of the visual arts. If one analyses the solution to this problem adequately, it is a symbolic form of the world-view of a period, and the transformation of these world-views can be traced in the metamorphosis of the solutions.

From within the problematics of the Historical School and neo-Kantianism, solutions do not come better than Panofsky's. It is subtle and supple, sensitive to particularity, but maintains connections to larger cultures and cultural development – maintains, in other words, the possibility of a history of art. But there is a nagging problem with Panofsky's solution. For though he found a sympathetic way of describing *a priori* problems of artistic representation, he unfortunately did so at precisely the time when the faith in any *a priori* universals or norms, such as constant, unchanging artistic problems, had utterly evaporated. And he found a way of sketching a continuous trajectory of artistic solutions at precisely the time when the notion of history having any meaningful continuity at all was cast into doubt.[25] Even if Spengler's *Decline of the West* (1918) had convinced few in the academy with its 'morphological' theses, it reflected faithfully the prevailing sense that history was radically discontinuous and that relations between eras and cultures were at best accidental, at worst adversarial. In this hugely popular book a traditional conception of history as a single entity with its own logic was replaced with a picture of the past as fragments without meaning. Similarly, Pinder had convinced few with his elaborate theory of generations,[26] but he did show that artistic *problematics* (and not only solutions) changed and, when juxtaposed, seemed incommensurable. And though its importance to the history of art was relatively marginal, Heidegger's *Being and Time* of 1927 delivered the *coup de grâce* to historicism of the reasonable and intuitive sort to which Panofsky answered. Heidegger accepted a radical historical relativism, but denied that man had any essence beyond his history and denied that history existed objectively on its own. History in a broad sense was reduced to the mere historicity of the single existential *Dasein*. The spareness of Heidegger's thought looked like a new beginning, an example of what philosophy could do without suspicious and worn notions of a tired tradition. But it was hardly the basis on which a history of art could be asserted, let alone confidently pursued. This situation, this bad timing, is certainly why Panofsky's early essays, despite their inherent interest and impressive rigour, have little influence on art-historical practice today.

The other major statement about Riegl from the 1920s, the other major attempt to find in that work a valid basis for the historical study of form, was that of Sedlmayr. Sedlmayr correctly points out that 'Riegl's ideas and all ideas organically connected to Kantianism are like chalk and cheese.'[27] His own thor-

oughly productive, if unresolved, reading of Riegl flies in the face of Panofsky's appealing, reasonable neo-Kantianism. Not seeking to repackage Riegl for common sense or for art-historical business as usual, Sedlmayr instead starts out from the murkier and more difficult aspects of the *Kunstwollen*.

For Panofsky, the *Kunstwollen* was a *concept*, not a real entity that had real effects; to take the *Kunstwollen* as a substance would be to hypostatise it. Sedlmayr instead takes the more difficult route, seeing the *Kunstwollen* as 'an agent, something actual and real'.[28] Flirting with a Hegelianism that spoke to the taste of few at the time, he stresses its status as a 'real force'.[29] And it is a power that takes the form of 'central structural principles',[30] which, when grasped, would allow the historian, 'in principle, to reconstruct different sides of the same culture – for example on the basis of a given [kind of] art to determine . . . the corresponding religion or philosophy or science'.[31] These are bold claims. Instead of providing a tidy solution to the contradictions and ambiguities of Riegl, as Panofsky did, Sedlmayr seems to ignore or rename, even occasionally accentuate the problematic core of the concept of *Kunstwollen*.

The reading of Riegl Sedlmayr offers in 1927 stands at a less advanced point in his own thought than does Panofsky's. It is less worked through and does not yet provide a full basis for understanding the young Viennese art historian's own developing position. He was clearly taking the history of art in another direction from the one chosen by Panofsky, but judging it on the basis of the Riegl essay is not possible. To characterise the battle over Riegl's legacy as it stood in 1927, I think, however, that we can say this. Panofsky's neo-Kantian reading of the *Kunstwollen* simply reproduced the static truce between the human and natural sciences. It was a stalemate of knowledge that sought to make culture an object, relegated to the past, and put in a realm of a spirit that could be studied only with a belief in transcendental meaning across that ever-increasing distance. In other words, if Panofsky offered a solution to a problem facing the history of art, then he did so with tools and concepts for which, by that time, advanced thought had very little use; he proposed to solve the pressing problems of twentieth-century art history with the conceptual tools of the nineteenth century. The fact is that with the crisis of historicism and the fragmentation of the collective into the mass, there was no longer any epistemology or philosophy of history that could adequately underwrite a connection between image and meaning. As Kracauer pointed out, trying to read the inconspicuous surface phenomena of the 1920s, the historian was faced with a difficult choice: on the one side stood the fiction of transcendence; on the other the prison of immanence, the lack of any meaning beyond the object. Panofsky opted for the happy fiction of transcendence. Sedlmayr, to whom I want now to turn, chose the more difficult path, one that should be followed with some care, for its significance to the historiography of art and its relation

to other tendencies has not been considered with the attention it deserves. His project was occasionally mysterious and often offensive, but it was ambitious and often productive too. He proposed to look at what mileage could be found in immanence and to test if it was a prison after all.

For Sedlmayr I: His Critique

As I have already suggested, despite its increasing prominence and the lively debates over 'Grundbegriffe', the history of art in the 1920s in no way represents the continuation of a project set on a firm base by Wölfflin and Riegl. It would be more accurate to describe it as a period of radical questioning and of a rejection of the kind of thought the 'founding fathers' represented. In his work of the mid- to late 1920s, Sedlmayr does not extend and develop the kind of art-historical thought represented by Riegl. Instead he rejects the project as a whole at the same time as he takes up selected and incompletely theorised aspects of Riegl's practice and seeks to re-evaluate them, repositioning Riegl's close attention to formal matters in a project conceived very differently. He makes no attempt to conceal the parts of the historicist theory that are no longer fruitful at the same time as he seeks to redeem the kinds of insights an older history of art nonetheless could achieve. Thus the strange and inconclusive reading of the 'quintessence' of the theory of the *Kunstwollen*, stressing the improbable belief in it as an autonomous historical force (certainly not Sedlmayr's view, but, as he writes, Riegl's); and thus his altogether more sympathetic and potentially productive reading of the artistic volition as taking the form of 'structural laws'.

But it would be wrong to look to an essay on Riegl for a sense of how Sedlmayr was really positioning himself (as one can with Panofsky). It is in other works of the period that Sedlmayr sketches the outlines of a coherent critique of historicist art history and a programme to refound it on post-historicist lines. These works show a keen awareness of the epistemological difficulties facing a history of art in the crisis of historicism, a sophisticated sense of the models available and an ambitious attempt to re-establish a firm philosophical base for the discipline.

Sedlmayr used his reviews of other scholars' works to outline his own positions, only once being taken to task – by Rudolf Wittkower – for completely ignoring the work ostensibly under review.[32] His evaluation of Karl Tolnai's *Die Zeichnungen Pieter Bruegels* in the first issue of *Kritische Berichte* is his first important methodological statement, cutting and fierce but precise and impressive. Sedlmayr criticises Tolnai's interpretation as belletristic and untheorised: the 'emotional' sphere takes precedence over the 'conceptual core', and Tolnai

works by and large with poetic metaphors. 'The author', writes Sedlmayr, 'imagines a sort of entry into the object that has nothing to do with scientific knowledge.' Here he sees a symptom of the sort of anti-intellectualism that was one reaction to the difficulties facing the problems in the humanities, the 'feeling widespread today' that a 'scientific' approach 'alienates from and undermines the contact with the objects studied, that, compared to the objects, "logical certainty is something colourless, cold, something nearly indifferent." '[33] Against this irrationalism, Sedlmayr reasserts his commitment to 'conceptual knowledge, conceptual truth.'[34] And he situates his criticism precisely in the context of the crisis of historicism and the responses to it:

> From the perspective of more established sciences, it is quite incomprehensible that this unconceptualized mode of thinking can make [such] claims in the history of art . . . This encourages some widespread misconceptions and confusions that emerged from the time when the historical sciences struggled for the specificity of its 'methods' and 'concept formation.' Almost without exception, these problems have been dealt with – though the majority of art historians have not noticed.[35]

Tolnai's 'intuitionist' approach is a lazy reaction to the epistemological stalemate of the human sciences. Sedlmayr instead rejects the categorical distinction between the *Naturwissenschaften* and the *Geisteswissenschaften*, 'a misunderstanding of the insight that "concept formation" here proceeds by other means and qualitatively different constitutive concepts are employed'.[36] Lack of conceptual rigour leads Tolnai into a logical contradiction: he proceeds intuitively (non-conceptually) but seeks to translate Bruegel's work into discursive (conceptual) statements, into what Bruegel 'wanted to say'.[37] 'Thus one learns only what Bruegel could have left behind in a theory composed in words.'[38] Sedlmayr quite properly points out that the approach needs to be reversed: he seeks conceptual knowledge of non-discursive objects.

There are elements of neo-Kantianism in this critique, but Sedlmayr has, in fact, another model in mind. It is Max Weber's attempt to mediate between a concern with lived experience and the need to develop scientific standards of argumentation, and Sedlmayr quotes Weber's methodological writings at length in this essay. He invokes Weber's notion of the ideal type and the search for 'concepts and judgements that are not identical with empirical reality, and that do not mirror it, but allow it to be ordered for thought in a valid way'.[39] In other words, he does not want to assert any rigid, pre-determining *a priori* concepts of the kind Wölfflin and Panofsky sought. And he chides Tolnai for eliding intuition with a 'confused notion of the "irrational" '.[40] Sedlmayr took Weber's point that counterintuitive actions in the past are not irrational, but are simply a foreign sort of 'value rationality' (*Wertrationalität*) as opposed to a more

clear-cut sort of 'ends rationality' (*Zweckrationalität*): 'Irrational action,' wrote Weber, 'is the sole privilege of the insane.'[41] Sedlmayr opposes any sort of irrationalist *Lebensphilosophie* but does not want to fall into the trap of neo-Kantianism, trying to describe and work inductively and descriptively with a range of responses evoked by non-discursive products in a way that allows them to be pushed toward rational argument, toward concepts.

If I have described Sedlmayr's critique of the history of art around 1925 at length, it is because informed analyses of such clarity were rare at the time. His solutions too, as articulated in scattered essays from 1925 to the programmatic 'Towards a Rigorous Science of Art' of 1930, are just as informed. They show Sedlmayr grappling with two attempts to overcome the crisis of knowledge and the split between the natural and cultural sciences: phenomenology and gestalt psychology.

The title 'Towards a Rigorous Science of Art'[42] is, in fact, a bit of playful hubris, echoing Edmund Husserl's famous essay 'Philosophy as a Rigorous Science'.[43] Sedlmayr here allies himself with the founder of phenomenology who rejected metaphysical 'depth' in the effort to 'return to the objects', to isolate the object anew and to redefine the tasks of philosophy. In his monograph on Borromini published in 1930, Sedlmayr quotes Husserl: 'If "the essential process of the reconstitution of rigorous sciences is the recasting of profound intuitions into rational form", then the prevailing ways of dealing with these problems [in the history of art] are, at best, pre-scientific.'[44] His approach also echoes Husserl's description of the intentional nature of the contents of consciousness. For the Husserl of the *Logical Investigations*, experiences are 'animated' by a 'certain act character.' Consciousness itself, in other words, gives meaning actively, by which Husserl means not that meaning is subjectively projected but rather that *perception* of the outside world is far more involved than would be suggested by older notions of passive *sensation*. This allows Sedlmayr to isolate the object of art-historical study in a way not dissimilar from Husserl's *epoché*:

> It is not the 'object' formed in this or that way out of brick, mortar, wood and lead in this or that stereometric form that is the artwork we call Fischer von Erlach's *Hofbibliothek*. This object becomes an artwork only as a result of specific (intentionally determined) human activity; it becomes a particular, individual artwork only when it is seen from the perspective of specific categories and at a specific level [*Niveau*].[45]

This 'bracketing out' procedure to define the intentional character of the object of study is of concern to Sedlmayr, who proposes attention to the 'single work of art' that can be 'studied in an unmediated way' as the 'primary objects of investigation'.[46] And he points out that the object of study is what Husserl

would call 'the thing itself' and not any concepts deriving from it. In other words, the art historian should study art*works*, not the styles that represent a set of forms characteristic of several artworks, not the 'spirit' they might be seen to represent.[47] Knowledge of artworks should not be 'a mere means to knowledge, a trace of something else that was to be disclosed through it'.[48] Sedlmayr wanted to avoid the risk of hypostatisation, the error of mistaking the concept derived from the object (style, spirit) for the object itself (the artwork).

Sedlmayr was clearly informed by Husserl's phenomenology, but it is, of course, gestalt psychology's new approach to visual perception that provided the most specific model for his attempt to refound the history of art on rigorously scientific ground. (And indeed phenomenology and gestalt psychology, which emerged from philosophy, are hardly unrelated in their assertion of the primacy of perception over sensation.[49]) Again, we can look to titles to see the sort of affiliations he was asserting. The journal he and Otto Pächt founded in 1930 and in which 'Towards a Rigorous Science of Art' appeared was called *Kunstwissenschaftliche Forschungen*, a cognate of the gestalt psychologists' own organ *Psychologische Forschung*.[50] Here too Sedlmayr was interested in the novel way in which the psychologists defined their object of study. The main assertion upon which the Berlin school gestaltists, from Max Wertheimer to Kurt Koffka and Wolfgang Köhler, founded their field was not only that the mind actively ordered perceptions, finding forms of 'togetherness' by which to make sense of sensations. Rather they postulated that these perceptions were not merely subjective projections of the mind; and that the forms, thoughts, and world constructed in this way had an independent psychological reality that was open to examination and analysis. The epigraph for Sedlmayr's first essay in gestalt psychology, 'Gestaltetes Sehen', is a précis of Kurt Koffka's 'Zur Theorie der Erlebniswahrnehmung':

> Describing and seeing an object, for example a motor that is perceived by a viewer for the first time, have a peculiarly reciprocal relation. Assuming I understand nothing of the motor, the function and interaction of its individual parts, I 'see' only a confused jumble, at best an accumulation of angular and round parts. A description is either utterly impossible (in the case of the 'confused jumble') or possible only as a list of parts. Such a description is clearly just as 'bad' as such a perception. Opposed to this is a description that captures the function and interaction of the parts and a correspondingly 'Gestalt' view [*gestaltetes Sehen*] of the motor, which not only forms the basis of a good description but can be the result of such a description.[51]

To study the motor one needs first to *see* it properly, and proper perception and description presuppose a correct understanding of it as a whole. For Sedl-

mayr, the object of study, the artwork itself, is first of all a correct description, and it is not so much the physical artefact but the ordered gestalt, the ordered whole by which the artist organised his visual materials. As such, it needs to be recreated. A rigorous science of art

> is faced with a very peculiar situation. Its primary objects of investigation only exist if we take a particular approach to things. . . . they must be re-created each time through real processes of reproduction out of the 'external' data of the artefact . . . *This thing only possesses artistic properties when it is approached with an 'artistic' attitude* [*Einstellung*], *and it only possesses specific artistic properties when it is seen in accordance with a specific attitude.* If one alters one's approach . . . the properties of the work of art are altered as well, even though the object itself remains unchanged; thus we construct the same object as a different work of art.[52]

Though not reducible to the physical substrate, the work of art is still objective:

> It would be a mistake to conclude from all of this that aesthetic products are entirely 'subjective' entities. On the contrary: just as works of art are repeatedly re-created and formed anew by viewing subjects, each work of art is itself, in its totality, an objective reality, a separate object world that can be examined and accepted like any other concrete reality and that can be penetrated through contemplation or conceptualization.[53]

This is an approach to the work of art that is potentially non-hermeneutic. Sedlmayr does not invoke the notion of *Verstehen* or empathic understanding, nor the notion of spirit or *Geist* as a causal factor. Instead, he insists on the object character of the work of art, even if the work of art is not identical to the *artefact*. For one can see the artefactual object in many different ways, but not *the* artwork: what is necessary to understand one's sensations is the *correct* attitude (*Einstellung*, often translated as 'mental set'), the one that reproduces that of the artist. For Wertheimer, 'there are several ways of grasping many phenomena, but generally only one can be correct: that which makes all states understandable and derivable from the central "idea" and thus gives meaning to the entire given.' This creates the problem, for Sedlmayr, of determining whether 'the work that one *intends* to examine is really present at hand'. It is thus 'necessary to establish that the attitude adopted [by the art historian] was adequate to this *specific* work'.

> The simplest case for determining the 'correct' attitude is that of determining the 'original' attitude – that is, the attitude under whose influence a particular, concrete artifact was formed in this way and no other. The more

> correct view of a work would be the one that construed previously unexplained aspects of the permanent, objective condition of the work as comprehensible, necessary and significant.[54]

Indeed, the 'whole' is often grasped first, even before the details enter consciousness; it is the correct, and original, gestalt that allows one to see these individual parts.

Sedlmayr's essays of this early period show not only a firm grasp of the principles behind gestalt psychology; they demonstrate an understanding of precisely which theoretical problems of the historiography of art they might potentially solve. And he understands the difference between the theory of the psychologist and the practice of the historian. His goal is not an understanding of how perception orders the world, but rather an understanding of historically removed artworks whose artefactual remains are extant. He does not try to abstract a world-view from a pattern of manipulations of *a priori* possibilities but rather to recreate an individual, historically distant event, an instance of this *Gestaltung*. Capturing that act of formation gives unmediated access to the historical situation: 'If one succeeds in finding the adequate attitude, a distant historical condition can be raised to the state of immediate experience in a much more complete and concentrated way than the usual comparative procedure in *Geistesgeschichte* of drawing parallels between artistic phenomena and corresponding evidence from other areas.'[55] For the time being, writes Sedlmayr, the task of the history of art is the establishment of correct descriptions. From then on the matter of expression, interpretation and so on can be addressed. The history of art, he writes, needs now to practise the 'thought experiment.'[56] Now adopting the hard-edged rhetoric of the 'rigorous' sciences of the laboratory, he is seeking to establish an 'experimental basis for the science of art'[57] with the art historian himself as the subject of the experiment, the '*Versuchsperson*'.[58]

Against Sedlmayr I: Bad Science

While it is clear that Sedlmayr's rhetoric occasionally gets the better of him, the aspects of the programme described above are impressive indeed. Sedlmayr's essays of the mid- to late 1920s represent some of the most intelligent commentary on the nature of the history of art as a discipline, its problems and its failures, and as such they are still worth reading today. And even if one would resist all too close an identification with the philosophically informed

experimental psychology of the Berlin School, the invocation of it is by no means gratuitous.

The question now is whether Sedlmayr could maintain in practice the rigorous character of his methodological writings. Sedlmayr's own 'thought experiments' concern Borromini, the subject of two of the essays on 'Gestalt Seeing' and a monograph of 1930, and Bruegel, in a major article of 1934 and again after the war, in 1951. These works show that to the end of his days, Sedlmayr did in fact pursue a project that can be related back to the ambitious and critical methodological essays. But even from the first, the results looked very strange. From the core of an epistemologically astute set of desiderata, Sedlmayr very quickly expanded his terms of reference to allow in vocabulary, bodies of knowledge, experimental results and even a metaphysics that make his writings even more disturbing than they are bold. Certainly these works map out an intellectual field that would be utterly foreign to the discipline that regrouped in the years following the Second World War, though in many ways his thought became more pronounced in its eccentricity in those later years. But it is worth following Sedlmayr on his forays from the centre so firmly established in the early essays, for the intellectual field in which he moved is, for all its traps and dead ends, a fascinating one, and one that brings us back to the problems pinpointed by Kracauer in the same years.

The book *The Architecture of Borromini*, published in 1930, was the project with which Sedlmayr was engaged as he worked out his methodological position and thus the first place to look for the practical results of his insights. Here he explicitly puts the approach he developed out of his critique of art historiography to the test of the architect's San Carlo alle Quattro Fontane, seeking to find its 'inner relationships and structural laws', to treat this work after its quasi-phenomenological reduction to the form of a gestalt 'as a minute world'.[59] It is a laborious read, interspersing theoretical prefaces with close description and analysis of the kind that represent the real legacy of Riegl, but translated into the new terms of gestalt psychology. For example:

> Because of their identical articulation, 'gestalt vision' ['*gestaltenden Sehen*'] sees at first the four walls with their niches – henceforth referred to as 'N' – as equivalent. One grasps their differing forms – here deep, there shallow; semi-circular, oval – as different developments of one and the same 'gestalt.'[60]

Proof of the correctness of his grasp of the whole, of the correct *Einstellung* that created and recreates San Carlo, is the meaning or sense Sedlmayr claims he can draw out of his object:

> That such inconspicuous details such as the form of the chorus cabinets (which were earlier considered completely arbitrary) can now be understood as 'meaningful', 'necessary', i.e. comprehensible in terms of the structural principle of the whole, can serve as proof that this principle has been correctly grasped.[61]

I cannot judge Sedlmayr's reconstitution and analysis of San Carlo.[62] Some of his descriptions strike me as forced; but I confess to finding the evocation of Borromini's architectural space in general – its relation to light, material, motifs and site – quite compelling.[63] What is more interesting, however, is the self-awareness and scrupulousness with which the argument is pursued. 'Since works are not realised out of pure intellect [*Geist*],' he writes, 'but rather by humans who are biopsychical beings, we cannot avoid recourse to psychology to explain certain states of affairs.'[64] But Sedlmayr is utterly naïve and clumsy in the systematic way in which he interleaves description with *ad hoc* experiment, historical states with modern typologies. Indeed, the very consistency with which he pursues this scientific line of thought turns into the real problem, the real scandal of the book. For it is not only gestalt psychology that Sedlmayr accepts as authoritative; he also builds his elaborate argument on the shaky foundation of Ernst Kretschmer's typology from *Physique and Character*. 'If there are features that allow conclusions about the "characteristics" of Borromini as a man' – Sedlmayr has invoked 'Borromini's race, his social class [*Schicht*], his temperament, his appearance (how he looked), his age at the creation of the relevant works, and so on' – then

> it would be possible, conversely, from these established or 'given' facts to deduce specific characteristics of his production. And in the best case, different qualities of . . . Borromini's architecture previously considered separately could be reasonably understood on the basis of a *single* characteristic of his person . . .
>
> The rigorous determination of such questions needs not to be proved first, as this has been done beyond doubt by the relevant disciplines . . .
>
> Specific (and as far as we can tell, timeless) psychic types display quite specific, indicative qualities in their artistic production; these emerge as consistently correlated with the psychophysical type to which the person in question belongs.[65]

And thus, the question of Borromini's psychophysical type is one 'that can now be answered empirically'.[66] Here, *in extenso*, is how the answer unfolds:

> The psychophysical types proposed by Kretschmer – 'cyclothyme' and 'schizothyme' – have become popular since these lines were written; I can thus refer to Kretschmer. According to Kretschmer, the following qualities

> are characteristic for the artistic production of the typical schizothyme; I paraphrase loosely:
>
> 1. Tendency to recast given forms in an unconventional way (arbitrariness).
> 2. Search for the most extreme expressive effect.
> 3. Tendency to unify heterogeneous elements of the same work and to connect them in a peculiar and unmotivated way.
> 4. Rigid constructive structure in combination with original and richly varied detail.
> 5. Prolific production disproportionate to actual commissions. Compulsive labour.
> 6. Combination of abstract-analytical, systematizing thought with dream-like fantasy. . . .
>
> [This] describes the characteristic qualities of Borromini's art in a way that leaves little to be desired. . . .
>
> Thus one would expect to find in Borromini a schizothyme type in its purest form. That this is indeed the case can be clearly established from the data extant on the person Borromini – his psychological behaviour and his somatic type. In these accounts he appears as practically a perfect example of a specific subcategory of the schizothyme subject and artist.[67]

Sedlmayr rehearses the anecdotal tradition on Borromini's character (deeply troubled); and he identifies the somatic type (Kretschmer distinguishes 'asthenic', 'athletic', and 'pyknic') as athletic, a bodily morphology showing (it seemed) a statistical correlation with schizothyme and, pathologically, schizophrenic behaviour.[68] Borromini is 'large and externally robust . . . Portraits show the tortured features of a melancholic with typically angular profile'.[69]

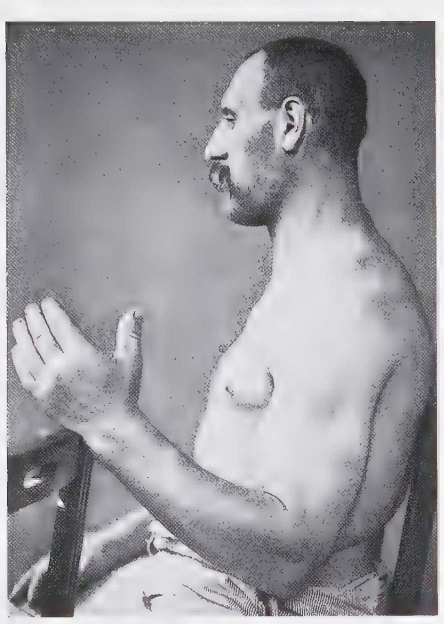
> The advantage of this approach for an understanding of Borromini's art is that various separate characteristics are united, as the manifestation of a specific psychic type in the realm of art. Considered on their own, it is hardly evident that, for example, prolific production and the tendency to crass expressive effects are so closely related; in association with this personality type, one can understand them as various peripheral manifestations of a very typical form of behaviour. They are completely reducible to the fact that Borromini was a schizothyme.[70]

Sedlmayr pursues this line of thought relentlessly. In the process, the notion of an abstracted, ideal-typical 'world-view' returns, and Borromini's is characterised, reasonably, if blandly, enough, as 'Cartesian'.[71] From which follows: 'The results of the fifth and sixth chapter can be raised to a higher level: the Cartesian world-view is clearly the typical world-view of a schizothyme. (Descartes figures too for Kretschmer as a prototypical schizothyme.)'[72]

Sebastiano Giannini, portrait of Francesco Borromini, from Giannini's edition of the *Opera del Caval. Francesco Boromino* I (Rome, 1720). Photograph courtesy Warburg Institute, University of London.

What went wrong? Obviously this is quackery, but it cannot be left at that. We need to see exactly how and where Sedlmayr lost control of his project in the Borromini book. For he has in fact built a brilliant base from which to proceed, starting off first with a two-pronged critique of positivism and historicism, and following with the isolation of the work of art phenomenologically as a response to a very real lack of conceptual clarity that plagued the discipline.

The first problem is that he presumes his ability to find the right *Einstellung*, to grasp the gestalt that represents the artwork. Ultimately, the simple assertion of a 'mental set' as correct is far too weak a base on which to rest historical arguments, and particularly so when one builds outwards from each hypothesis so recklessly and relentlessly as Sedlmayr does. The assertion of the nature of the gestalt is less hypothetical than dogmatic, less honest about the speculative nature of the critical moment in the analysis of works of art than the sloppy intuitionism from which Sedlmayr seeks to distance the discipline. Sedlmayr claimed as his 'proof' that on the basis of his analysis, he 'deduced', sight unseen, motives that *should* appear in Borromini's work and later 'confirmed' their existence.[73] The result is a ridiculous platitude. Certainly a view of the baroque as a 'schizothyme' era is less helpful than Wölfflin's rough and ready empirical approximation of *a priori* formal categories. The second problem is a more common one, a trap of historicism in general. It is what Gombrich called the 'physiognomic fallacy', the assumption that the character



Athletic type, acromegaly. From Ernst Kretschmer, *Körperbau und Charakter*, fifth/sixth ed. (Berlin, 1926).

of a work of art represents an expression of a unified character, be it of a person, culture or era. Finally, he confuses gestalt psychology with physiognomy, and moreover a kind that, for all its modish respectability, is disturbingly close to the garden-variety sort of phrenologists and racists.

Sedlmayr blurs the fundamental difference between the theory of the gestalt and Kretschmer's theory of psychosomatic types. The nature of this confusion can be described in this way. Gestalt psychology represents a theory about the way sensations are ordered by the mind, how sensations (which are external) are turned into perceptions (which define the juncture of living being and world, subject and object). Now, the subject might order the perceived world by gestalts. Equidistant lines might be seen as falling into groups, stationary lights flashed in succession as movement, a curled lip and squinting eyes as aggression. A *second* physiognomic fallacy, however, is to assume that these perceptions capture qualities that *exist* in the world. This was, in fact, a point of debate. Christian von Ehrenfels, who coined the phrase 'gestalt qualities', ultimately asserted that gestalt perception captures the order of the world; Wolfgang Köhler denied this.[74] Such perception is clearly reasonably reliable but hardly infallible (the 'aggressive' other might be the victim of a stroke, or photographed laughing). Thus, theories of expression, such as those used by Sedlmayr, in fact represent gestalt principles, but turned on their head; they construe principles of *perception* as principles of *expression*. In the case of Borromini, it might be argued that his style expresses a certain personality,

LEFT Engraved portrait of René Descartes. Photograph courtesy Warburg Institute, University of London.

FACING PAGE Athletic type, schematic. From Ernst Kretschmer, *Körperbau und Charakter*, 5th/6th ed. (Berlin, 1926).

however mediated, or that it expresses a certain world-view. Human beings have personalities and world-views, and they make objects; the latter might express the former in various ways. But to see this as the result of a body or psychosomatic type involves trouble, as the thinking, producing and expressing being is a fact of nature, and nature does not think and express as human beings do. Physiognomy is gestalt psychology in reverse or upside down. This logical fallacy, a false commutativity, could easily be covered over on the seeming evidence of experimental science.

It is easy enough to see how a theory of perception can be turned into nonsense. We know this, as laborious as a proof of it might be. The reason I have dwelt on this distinction between perception and expression at such length, however, is that it was obviously unstable at the time; the precise site where Sedlmayr falls from phenomenology into farce was a very sensitive one in the wake of the crisis of historicism. At this time, much intellectual pressure was put on this membrane, this frontier between being and world. Once this zone was located and analysed, the areas on either side no longer looked the same. Another way of putting this is that with the crisis of transcendent knowledge, immanence itself had to be re-thought, at least in any area where objects were seen to have meanings as well as qualities. In any case, by 1931 Sedlmayr found himself in the position of more than one scholar at the time, in a very grey area between charlatantry and the most advanced work in the human sciences. Later

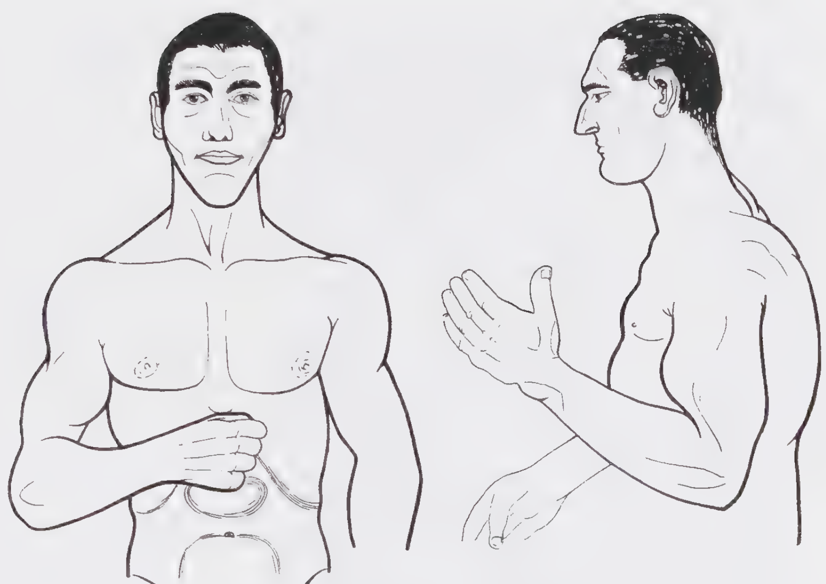


Abb. 4. Athletischer Typ (schematisch).

we will look at this zone, whose contours are now so unclear. But first, back to Sedlmayr, to see how his project developed.

Excursus: Walter Benjamin meets Sedlmayr Halfway (but they do not meet)

The irredeemable ugliness of the Borromini book was not yet clear in 1934, when Sedlmayr's next major work was published (indeed, *Die Architektur Borrominis* was republished in 1939). Sedlmayr did not, however, pursue the weak physiognomy of the Kretschmerian sort further. More surprising, however, is that he dropped the potentially very promising gestaltist approach to the work of art as well. The writings that followed – I will be looking at his extraordinary essay 'Bruegel's *Macchia*' – clearly emerge from the same sphere of thought, the very same principles and procedures, but they are no longer framed in terms of Berlin School psychology (which degenerates into bad physiognomy). Sedlmayr changed his vocabulary, but not his methods. Presumably he found little sympathy for the gestalt project among his peers, which would not be surprising considering its embattled status, even (or especially) among philosophers and other thinkers dealing with a similar project of grasping

Cephalometer, used for precise skull measurements for body-type and phrenological classification purposes. Photograph courtesy Museum voor Communicatie, The Hague.

wholes and overcoming 'atomistic' approaches without sacrificing the status of scientific knowledge. Oddly, he is forced to frame his observations in the more intuitive, indeed 'poetic' terms against which he reacted.

Walter Benjamin reviewed the first volume of the *Kunstwissenschaftliche Forschungen* with considerable sympathy, especially for the most substantial contribution, Carl Linfert's 'The Fundamentals of Architectural Drawing', which was discussed here in chapter two. This is the volume introduced by 'Towards a Rigorous Science of Art'; and here too Benjamin would have found much that spoke directly to him. He would have found a concern with the single artefact that mirrored his own; a positive appreciation of Riegl;[75] the critique of historicism, of the passive consideration of the dead objects of the past; he would have found a dialectical sense of new developments having a reciprocal affect on older works. And he would have found his own notion of the monadological nature of the work of art. Listen to Sedlmayr:

> Once the individual work of art is perceived as a still unmastered task specific to the study of art, it appears powerfully new and close. Formerly a

> mere means to knowledge, a trace of something else that was to be disclosed through it, the work of art now appears as a self-contained *small world* or microcosm of its own particular sort . . . The primary consequence of this transition is a tremendous increase in qualitative richness, next to which the old descriptions and the old way of seeing appear pale, schematic, abstract.[76]

Indeed, this *was* Benjamin's own idea. This notion of the particular containing within it a microscopic image of the whole was elaborated by Benjamin in his *Origins of the German Tragic Drama*, where he writes 'The idea is a monad. The being that enters into it . . . brings – concealed in its own form – an indistinct abbreviation of the rest of the world of ideas.' Benjamin refers to Leibniz, who saw the monads as the stuff of which the universe is made. Leibniz wrote of the monad as having 'no windows, through which anything could come in or go out'; as 'different from every other'; and, despite their particularity, being, each one, 'a mirror of the universe in its own way.'[77] This was a metaphysics of immanence that Benjamin, and Sedlmayr, turned into an epistemology of the particular.

Now Leibniz was available in any scholarly library, and Sedlmayr does not cite Benjamin. But he *does* cite Carl Linfert on this set of ideas, and Linfert's contribution to *Kunstwissenschaftliche Forschungen* drew, as we have seen, very courteously on Benjamin's own failed *Habilitation*.[78] Linfert was full of admiration for Benjamin's book and close to Sedlmayr as well; he would certainly have discussed these ideas with the Viennese scholar so interested in new approaches to the baroque.

In any case, Benjamin's review points out that there were routes to Sedlmayr's astute approach that had nothing to do with gestalt psychology. Benjamin quotes the notion, so familiar to him, of the individual work as 'unmastered task' and as 'small world'. Yet 'Sedlmayr's essay,' he writes, 'demonstrates how difficult it is for a particular course of research (such as the one represented here) to establish purely methodological definitions without reference to any concrete examples whatsoever.' Benjamin, apparently and probably fortunately, did not know the contemporary Borromini book. 'This is difficult, but is it necessary? Is it appropriate to place this new aspiration so assiduously under the patronage of phenomenology and gestalt theory? It could easily be that in the process one loses nearly as much as one gains.'[79] Before the review was published, as it turns out, these passages were struck, but Linfert promised Benjamin he would pass on the substance of this criticism to Sedlmayr.[80]

So Benjamin was without doubt one of several voices moving Sedlmayr away from an improperly deductive use of gestalt principles and towards a more inductive approach to empirical material, to objects and images. And the weak-

ness of the deductive bent Sedlmayr exhibited was clear. The Borromini book was driven by a methodological brief that led disastrously, as if with its own momentum, to the circular conclusion that Borromini's work both reflected and could be explained by his angular profile and athletic physique. Benjamin could see the risks but was clearly unaware that the worst had already occurred, otherwise he would not have been willing to meet Sedlmayr halfway between criticism and common cause.

For Sedlmayr II: Art Historiography as Modernism

> *I hardly know if I am the same person to whom you address your precious letter . . . Am I the same person who, at the age of twenty-three, beneath the stone arcades of the great piazza of Venice, found in himself the cadences of Latin prose whose plan and order delighted him more than the edifices of Palladio and Sansovino rising out of the sea? And could I, though otherwise the same, have lost so completely from my innermost self the marks and scars of this product of my own strained thought – so much so that in your letter before me the title of my short treatise stares back at me, alien and cold? That I could not grasp it as a familiar image of joined words but had to read it word by word, as if seeing the Latin terms put together this way for the very first time?*
>
> – Hugo von Hofmannsthal, 'The Letter of Lord Chandos'[81]

The first Bruegel essay represents on the one hand a continuation of the astute concerns of the early work around the Borromini book and the 'Rigorous Science of Art', and on the other a sharp divergence from them. Sedlmayr continues his exploration of gestalt vision but renames it, cutting his critical readings loose from any methodological postulates and coordinates of the kind that must have proved, in the end, so embarrassing. At the same time, the epistemological questions for which he had such ready answers in the earlier work reappear as thematic questions for which he has none, and this brings him, surprisingly but perhaps inevitably, from philosophical modernity to artistic modernism.

As for the first point, Sedlmayr drops the vocabulary of the laboratory and the references to the Berlin School gestalt psychologists, but he begins with a

gesture towards another way of describing the immediate, unmediated grasp of the image or object as a whole. He conjures, as if out of nowhere, another concept, that of Vittorio Imbriani's theory of the *macchia*, the blot or colour patch.[82] The *macchia* represents 'the image of the first *distant* impression of an object or a scene, the first and characteristic effect, to imprint itself upon the eye of the artist . . . It is the springing point . . . brought forth by the particular grouping of variously coloured persons and things'. It is a view characterised by 'the distance we experience when we have not yet registered the perceived object in all its detail'.[83]

On the colour patch Sedlmayr quotes Croce, the populariser of Imbriani's term. The painter, writes Croce, begins with the *macchia*, which 'without any further objective definition whatsoever, is fully capable of arousing' the feeling produced by the final picture.[84] Completing the picture from the *macchia* 'means nothing other than a strong *inner* approach to the object, a clarification and consolidation of that which pierced our eye as a brilliant flash'.[85] The *macchia* is thus direct and immediate, intuitive and non-conceptual (an '*inner* approach'), and appears at once (the speed with which images 'flip' in the famous gestalt diagrams). Further, Sedlmayr claims, one can 'deduce' or 'derive the larger portion of Bruegel's preferred pictorial motives from the . . . "pure" pictorial form, from precisely . . . the *macchia* – if one understands them correctly'.[86] (The correct, but unproved and unprovable, *Einstellung* is still the shaky base of the argument.) Doing this allows the art historian to grasp the 'intellectual unity' of the work; his task is to 'reconstruct the colour patch from which the finished picture emerges'.[87] In other words, the *macchia* is simply the gestalt by another name.

Be that as it may, Sedlmayr's description of the *macchia* – or the gestalt, or the structuring principle – of Bruegel's middle-period figure paintings is typically incisive, precise and convincing. He describes the tendency of Bruegel's paintings to disintegrate into a pattern of patches, unconnected and unordered, at the front of the picture plane, and he explores sensitively the tendency of the figures to assert independence from their spatial envelope and break apart into independent, meaningless, parts. With the same tenacious consequence (or foolish consistency) that he shows in the Borromini book, Sedlmayr identifies the geometric forms that Bruegel favours to this end, the pictorial motifs to which these correspond, the qualitatively different treatment of the landscape into which the figures are put. Whatever his starting point or his conclusions, Sedlmayr's reading of the works remains perhaps the most complete and compelling in the literature.

This reading focuses upon figures with body parts that seem mechanical and detachable, bodies that evoke the simple geometry and crudity of everyday peasant objects, flat faces devoid of modelling or nuance, limbs that seem

severed and mutilated (and occasionally are), the 'disintegration of form' which 'corresponds in the real world to the process of destruction'.[88] Bruegel, writes Sedlmayr, has captured in his *macchia* the 'expressive register' of 'the clumsy, dull, unarticulated, and primitive; the fragmentary, pieced together, and disintegrating; the self-contained, isolated, and atomistic; mass confusion, upheaval, and chaos'.[89] And this 'astonishing and disturbing'[90] *macchia* is put in the service of subject matter that conforms to the 'expressive register': 'peasants, children, the deformed (cripples, the blind, epileptics, fools), the mass, apes, and madness.'[91] 'What,' asks Sedlmayr, 'is the common denominator of the preferred motifs that we have identified?'

> They are all manifestations of life in which the purely human borders on other, 'lower' states that threaten, dull, distort, or ape its substance. Primitives – a hollow form of human; the mass – more raw and primitive than the individual man; the deformed – only half human; children – not yet completely human; the insane – no longer human. These are liminal states of humanity in which and through which the nature of man is cast into doubt. And they are the very subjects . . . to which modern anthropology has turned its attention in recent time, as if it were possible to grasp the nature of humanity precisely in these liminal states . . . (One thinks of studies of the psychology of primitives, children, the mentally ill, the crowd, apes, and the intoxicated.)[92]

Such passages represent what has been nicely characterised as 'the monstrous dimension of Sedlmayr', and it is undeniable.[93] The world that Sedlmayr attributes to Bruegel, and that he at the same time finds so terrifyingly modern, is one gone mad, a world of mass politics, mass movements, mass hysteria. It is a world that Sedlmayr found lapsed, and that he sought, in his own modest way, to bring under control, something he attempted through his early membership in the National Socialist Party and his enthusiastic embrace of Hitler's *Anschluß*.[94]

It is certainly easy enough to see such a relentless analysis of Bruegel's work as Sedlmayr's own projection, as fear and loathing of a world that he found impossible to accept and to understand. I would like to suggest, however, that there is another subtext to this disturbing essay, one that emerges when it is read in reverse, towards the vanishing point of the epistemological concerns that were the driving force of his earlier work and which seemed to disappear. That subtext is the unstable status of knowledge of man, his and her nature and history, and it figures not as a matter of method but as *experience*.

For Sedlmayr's reading of Bruegel is, as I have suggested, a modernist one, and Sedlmayr himself is, however uncomfortably, a modernist. In 1934 his terms of reference are already disturbingly close to the National Socialist dis-

Pieter Bruegel, *Netherlandish Proverbs*, 1559. © Staatliche Museen zu Berlin, Gemäldegalerie/bpk, 2004. Photograph Joerg P. Anders.

course of degeneracy and race, but at the same time, they reveal an obsessive interest in the limits of experience and representation, an acceptance that these are the proper artistic concerns of the day. And in his attempt to get to the roots of Bruegel's *macchia*, he invokes, in his footnotes, the work of Rilke, the Russian formalists, Karl Jaspers, Cocteau, Picasso, de Chirico, montage and the surrealists. To see the modernity of Sedlmayr's description of Bruegel's pictorial world, it must be read in terms of the questions it asks instead of the values it undeniably suggests. In this light, it emerges for what it is, a phenomenological analysis of a world of doubt, a meditation on the nature of perception and knowledge in a world devoid of meaning. This is its pathos.

'And with that, the decisive world can be spoken, the word that holds the key to an understanding of both Bruegel's characteristic *macchia* and his characteristic motifs. . . . The word is *estrangement*.'[95] It is estrangement at the level of knowledge and perception, at the intersection of transcendence and immanence, subject and object, that emerges most clearly in Sedlmayr's description. The experience of alienation 'is familiar to everyone as a timeless possibility of

perception. It can be induced by certain psychological conditions', conditions which are specified in a note: 'for example, repetitive, monotonous recitation of the same word causes it to shed its meaning; while staring at something causes it to shed its visual sense.' Similarly, 'familiar words suddenly lose their clear and stable meaning; they become empty and sound as if they belong to a foreign language'.[96] But the potentially nightmarish loss of automatic meaning reawakens a different sort of access to the world:

> To the extent that this occurs, their purely sensuous tone, devoid of meaning, becomes more intense; it seems that one has never heard them before. The same experience can occur with gestures, facial expressions, movements, and so on. Movement frozen in a snapshot, for example, can take on this estranged, incomprehensible character.[97]

The subject's access to the outer world is undermined, untrustworthy. Sedlmayr struggles to describe this: the picture 'disintegrates'; it is 'as if there were a thick sheet of ice between picture and beholder'; the painting 'wears a mask'; and 'the picture itself, behaving in a way so singularly different from others, seeming to dissolve and decompose before our eyes, strikes the viewer who sees this process as bizarre and alien'.[98] Language too becomes unreliable as the distinction between literal and figurative breaks down; it hides vast spaces and secrets. In the *Netherlandish Proverbs*,

> it is the world of language that is 'turned into image' and thus presents itself as curiously estranged. This painted image is the visualisation of the boundless world of fantasy hidden in the 'imagery' of language. Who still thinks about the images embodied in proverbs? Language perpetually surrounds us with a world of images that is . . . scurrilous, absurd, uncanny, and comical.[99]

It takes but the estrangement of the image to make children's games appear 'absurd, uncanny and suspicious as the behaviour of a band of lunatics or other beings incomprehensible to us.'[100] Art can bring forth the experience of alienation that is 'a familiar phenomenon of the diseased psyche.'[101] In Bruegel's work, distinctions break down: 'The inanimate and normally inexpressive things of the human sphere – utensils, houses, ships – gain vitality to the same degree that vitality is drained from things that are usually alive.'[102] More frighteningly, 'lifeless things, usually expressionless, acquire a face and gaze back at the viewer. (This is a primitive experience and an experience of children.)'[103] In Bruegel's pictures, man is positioned in a liminal zone between human and animal, where the nature of humanity can be grasped. But that grasp is hardly reassuring: for this type of vision, 'the distinction between dead and alive simply does not exist.'[104] One theme of Bruegel's work is the alienation of objects of the world from the viewer; the other is the doubt regarding 'the opposition

Pieter Bruegel, *The Beekeepers*, 1568. © Staatliche Museen zu Berlin, Kupferstichkabinett/bpk, 2004. Photograph Joerg P. Anders.

between nature and non-nature . . . the alien existence of the human world in nature.'[105]

Now these are matters Sedlmayr finds in Bruegel's pictures, those pictures that are 'peculiarly suited to proving Imbriani's theories, for in a curious way they embody, even in their finished state, that first distant vision'.[106] And lest we leave the matter with an attribution of these problems simply to Bruegel and his work, consider the huge question, silly and sublime, that these pictures lead Sedlmayr to ask: 'What is man, anyway?'[107] This, of course, is the same question asked by psychologists at the time, comparing animal and human response in laboratories, by philosophers from Scheler to Heidegger, and by biologists and anthropologists of the period. Similarly, 'Contemplating the picture itself then raises another question: "What is a picture?"'[108] That is the very question art historians began to ask gestalt psychology, but now reframed as an ontological one. And it is the question, after all, that Sedlmayr started with in his work of the 1920s.

Sedlmayr raises huge issues of radical doubt with regard to the image and the deep instability of our knowledge of it. He stresses the strange wonder and

fear involved in approaching images, the impossibility of understanding them and packaging them for knowledge. It is all a bit clumsy, alternately despairing and precise, astute and naïve. Perhaps it could be put this way: if it is a temptation to see Sedlmayr as a sort of art-historical Goebbels, we can also see 'Bruegel's *Macchia*' as the long overdue Lord Chandos letter of the history of art.

Against Sedlmayr II: Bad Poetry, Bad Philosophy

He was of the opinion that we investigate visual matters far too carelessly.

– Ernst Jünger, quoted by Hans Sedlmayr

What we cannot speak about we must pass over in silence.

– Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*, §7

Sedlmayr began his university career with a series of essays and a dissertation focusing on Borromini. These works were founded on an insightful critique of art-historical epistemology, but, in the search for new models, ended by hovering uncomfortably between gestalt psychology and physiognomy (though with the rhetorical weight on the former). In the Bruegel essay of 1934, he continued his project of exploring the work of art in its immediacy and its immanence. Now his argumentation was a very different one, his purpose more directly hermeneutical than methodological, but his critical procedure, emerging from phenomenology, remained by and large the same. After the Second World War, Sedlmayr revisited the work of Bruegel. The occasion was his inaugural address when assuming the prestigious chair in art history in Munich. This marked his return to university life after the loss of his chair in Vienna in the wake of his Nazi party membership and his long involvement with national socialism in the pre-war years, his new association with socially conservative circles of the Catholic Church, and the controversy surrounding what must be called, in every sense of the term, his rehabilitation. Sedlmayr's return to the academy is worthy of attention in its own right, as a case study of the interweaving of career, ideology and university politics, but it has been treated elsewhere.[109] What interests me here is the way in which the return to Bruegel in the Auditorium Maximum of the University of Munich on 30 May 1951 (then published in 1957, and again, in modified form, in 1959) completes a certain intellectual trajectory.

Pieter Bruegel, *The Parable of the Blind.* (Museu Nazionale Capodimonte, Naples). From Max Dvořák, *Kunstgeschichte als Geistesgeschichte* (Munich, 1924).

The subject is a single painting, the *Parable of the Blind*, but Sedlmayr is still after the elusive goal of an unmediated reading of pictorial form in its immanence, one that was adequate for a complete interpretation of an image and that needed, in its ideal case, no evidence from realms beyond the visible. This is the quest that haunted Riegl's contributions to the discipline, that lay behind Panofsky's interest in the neo-Kantian notion of symbolic form, and that provided the motor for Sedlmayr's search for a rigorous science, whether that led to Husserl's phenomenology, gestalt psychology, the thought experiment of the colour patch, or to the pressing and disturbing questions of advanced psychiatrists, biologists, anthropologists and artists. Now the gestalt or the *macchia* – form with its immediate plenitude of meaning – has another name. Sedlmayr uses the term *anschaulicher Charakter* or 'visible character', but though its conceptual contours are slightly different, it is an attempt to define the same phenomenon as in the earlier works. Presented as a 'structural analysis', this is Sedlmayr's third and last attempt to attach a concept to his elusive goal and to build an art-historical practice upon it. Even on its own terms, it is less stable than the earlier texts. It shifts more awkwardly from one kind of authority to another, one order of knowledge to very different ones. But it is, perhaps, all the more revealing for that.

Once again, Sedlmayr flirts with the rhetoric of the laboratory. He calls his essay the 'paradigm' of a 'structural analysis', and in the original publication the text is divided by numbered paragraphs presenting data and conclusions on the model of the natural sciences, sections that mimic the report of a scientific procedure (the more commonly available anthologised reprint of 1959 has, among other alterations, been made more discursive). And he presents his object, Bruegel's *Parable of the Blind*, using the well-known optical apparatus of the psychotechnician:

> If one presents a reproduction of the picture to an observer very quickly, using a tachistoscope, observers unfamiliar with it cannot make clear statements about details of what they saw. The are unable to say whether they saw five or six figures, or what is otherwise depicted. They do not recognise, for example, that blind men are represented, nor what is happening, nor how the individual pictorial elements are arranged.[110]

Tachistoscope or not, we are familiar with this. It is the kind of vision Sedlmayr has previously tried to describe:

> And yet the unarticulated, total impression is in no way indefinite. Different observers agree to a startling degree in their basic description of the perceived, global impression; the differences are not a matter of the core of this impression but rather simply the linguistic formulation of this perception. In all these descriptions, the visual character of the 'uncanny' or 'uncomfortable' [*des 'Unheimlichen'*] appears: 'I saw something uncanny', or 'I saw something spooky', 'I saw something that inspired fear', or, even more pithily, 'I saw something like a dance of death' – this is how the reactions are characterised.[111]

In describing this immediate grasp anew, Sedlmayr rehearses a familiar register of concepts. This kind of vision is the 'gestalt', the 'determinate aspect' of the picture, its 'structured gestalt quality', and like the *macchia*, it leads immediately to 'higher levels of meaning'. Like the gestalt, the impression is not an 'emotion' produced and projected by the viewing subject, but the 'visible character' of a perceived process, 'something "objective," not "inner" but "external."'[112] Such 'total impressions' are as 'rich or saturated *as* feelings', but something fundamentally external that can be isolated, that 'imposes itself on us in our being from the picture'.

Sedlmayr offers two new sets of coordinates for understanding what he earlier called the *macchia* or the gestalt. He invokes Adalbert Stifter's childhood memory of chords and musical harmony ('far back in the emptiness, nothingness . . . a happiness, a delight that took hold of me violently, that bored into me, almost annihilated me').[113] And his term 'visible character' comes from a

scientific authority. It is based on psychologist Phillip Lersch's 'characterology' and his theory of character 'levels'. More specifically, Sedlmayr relates 'visible character' to the experience of what Lersch calls the 'endothymic base' of the 'entire human organism'.[114]

It is certainly interesting that Sedlmayr invokes this notion from a form of psychology that was, by then, uncomfortably close to the more criminal practices of the sciences in the Third Reich. Certain bodies of knowledge, however, maintained a now hardly credible afterlife in the universities and the military; it is only with a half-century's retrospect that the sciences of character have been lumped together and their histories collectively truncated with the end of Nazi Germany. It is also revealing that the authority of a canonical work of literature is felt to be helpful. But most revealing is the third direction Sedlmayr takes, the third zone into which he pushes his description and finally positions it. One sees, due to Bruegel's formal means, 'an ineluctable process . . . something uncanny . . . that cannot be grasped rationally',[115] and Sedlmayr calls this approach, this kind of perception, 'a physiognomic grasp of the world and of art'.[116] It is a 'physiognomic' approach to the world that allows us to see 'immediately' the subject of the image instead of pure forms,[117] that lets us see in the picture that the subject matter is the 'uncanny', the 'unsure', the 'foreign', the 'fragmented'. The physiognomic reading of colours as grey, ghostly, dead and hopeless is not the result of 'conventional colour interpretations of allegorical or symbolic nature, but rather immediately perceptible 'visible character' that are based in the *essence* of the colours'.[118] It is a physiognomic form of perception, a physiognomic ontology that he has no hesitation, in 1957, in relating to the 'metaphysical thesis of intellect as opponent of the soul' of the antisemitic philosopher Ludwig Klages, and though this praise of the thoroughly compromised Klages was excised from the 1959 republication, Sedlmayr still called by name for a 'physiognomic understanding of the picture' that 'in the articulated interpretation of the visual image and its embodied meaning' would be so much 'richer' than any conceptual grasp.

'Visible character' is the term Sedlmayr uses. 'Character' was, in the hands of a Lersch, an object of scientific study both qualifiable and quantifiable in the laboratory and workplace. But *anschaulich* means far more than 'visible' in the sense of 'visual'; it connotes 'clear', 'apparent', even 'graphic' in the sense of 'obvious'. The noun and its modifier brought together constitute the physiognomic postulate: that character is immediately visible. And Sedlmayr's approach to physiognomy has an occult tinge that places it in the vicinity of the mystical tendencies that held sway around the turn of the century. In a methodological statement of 1956, he expands on the difficulties facing the analysis of 'visible character' as follows. The main difficulty facing the interpretation of works of art 'in the mechanical age'

> lies in the fact that the organ for the grasp of visual character has atrophied in most people. The capacities for abstract thought, for objective observation, for the hedonistic isolation of pleasant details are developed at the expense of true 'vision'. . . .
>
> In the evolution of humanity and, at a smaller scale, in the evolution of individuals, the ability to grasp visual characters (to grasp physiognomies) is an older, more original capacity than to understand forms and colours purely formally, separated from their visual expression. Children can distinguish 'visual characters' (friendly, evil, happy, sad) as colours and forms . . . The world of primitive peoples is saturated with such physiognomic experiences . . . that are inseparably joined with objective qualities. In time this unified world unravels.
>
> From then on, there are two *modes of perception*: a primordial, physiognomic mode, in which things, colours, forms, *everything* can appear serious or gay, powerful or tired, loose or tense (to mention only a few of many physiognomic qualities). And then a later, advanced, conceptual-objective-technical mode. Every object and every quality can be grasped either 'objectively' or physiognomically, in its 'visible character'. . . .
>
> The physiognomic interpretation of the human face is now but a vestige of an original mode of perception with which, once, all things were considered.[119]

Christopher Wood has rightly pointed out that the importance of gestalt psychology in Sedlmayr's work is 'overrated'.[120] Although the rhetoric of the gestalt is in his work, it is not really possible to find results that depend on principles and procedures of the new school of psychology. Nor is there the mad statistical etiology of Ernst Kretschmer, nor the 'characterology' of Philipp Lersch. Instead, Sedlmayr centres his discussions on the immediate human grasp of a world of which he is part, a grasp that is instinctive and not conceptual, a form of knowledge that flies in the face of enlightenment thought since Descartes, which denies the distinction between subject and object and the Kantian critique of knowledge that followed from this. He is obviously attracted to Husserl's reassertion of the possibility of transcendent knowledge in the immediate encounter with the thing but unwilling to do the philosophical work that this would entail (and it admittedly had little to do with the practice of an art historian). He knew Heidegger's work but apparently found the analytic of *Dasein* rather too limiting for a history of Western art. Always searching for an immediate and complete knowledge of the visual, one that could be deployed historically, one that was based in the density of the human body and its manifold possibilities of knowledge, he ransacked the widely varying registers of knowledge available to him, from philosophy to psychology, poetry to painting. In the end he could find no way of discussing his approach

to the visual other than in terms of the 'physiognomic', with all its echoes of quackery and superstition. Perhaps an interesting starting point in the 1920s, it was by the late 1950s not a promising base on which to build the human sciences in the new Federal Republic. It was an inglorious and unsatisfying end to an intellectual journey that began with many reasons for optimism.

Sedlmayr moved throughout his career around the central void of a non-conceptual grasp of historical images; he tried probing (his occasionally impressive 'thought experiments'), declaiming (his heavy-handed use of scientific authorities), even pleading ('What is a picture, anyway? What is man?'). But in the face of great questions, he lacked the poetic good sense that led Hofmannsthal's fictional Chandos to surrender wordlessly to the plenitude of the visual, and he lacked the philosophical stoicism and tact that made Wittgenstein's famous silences so pregnant. He kept confronting the pale concept with the infinite enigma of the artwork by whatever means he found to hand, ending in the occult and the disreputable.

It could be argued that physiognomy was a late detour, a final dead end to Sedlmayr's project, but I think, in fact, that it was the very beginning. The physiognomic challenge and various responses to it are what Sedlmayr identified as the legacy of the Vienna School, and with characteristic consequence he confronted it directly. Throughout his career, the principles for the study of visual form that he took as his own are precisely those of what could be called a physiognomic world-view; and along with various other agendas, this world-view is deeply inscribed in art history's romantic, and romantic anti-capitalist, notion of form as style.

Physiognomy: this is perception that grasps the elements of the world, be they faces or landscapes, cultures or works of art, as wholes, spontaneously and in an instant. In the work of Johann Christian Lavater, John Graham has identified three corollaries to the physiognomic postulate that sound very familiar to art historians. First, that all created things in the world are individual and unique; second, that 'every minute part' has, within it, 'the nature and character of the whole', or is 'an image of the whole'; and third, that all created things are unities that are indivisible.[121] Taken loosely, these are merely notions that could be considered romantic; taken literally they would lead to questions that can be either philosophical, psychological or occult. Sedlmayr tried, at various stages and in unstable admixtures, to encompass them all. The result is the most fascinating failure of twentieth-century art historiography, its greatest scandal both ideologically and epistemologically.

A few questions, however, remain. Is there anything – anything at all – that can be recouped from Sedlmayr's project? Did the like-minded of Sedlmayr's era all end up in the fascist camp? Was Sedlmayr's project a simple mutation, isolated and sterile? And what was physiognomy, anyway?

The Visible Man

> *Therefore I begin this attempt at an* art-philosophy of film *with a request directed to the learned guardians of aesthetics and the sciences of art: before the portals of your exalted academy a new art has stood for years and begged to be allowed in.*
>
> – Béla Balázs, *The Visible Man* (1924)

I have already argued that the issues around which Sedlmayr's work circled – both his impressive and his uglier work – have an important consistency, logic and coherence. In its eccentric but rigorous way, the project makes sense. What I would like to do now is look at the slightly different ways others addressed some of the same issues and the use to which they put their conclusions. At issue is the odd but compelling modernity of the elements that Sedlmayr (unsuccessfully) put into play.

The kind of vision that interested the art historian – quick, intuitive, immediate and habitual – is, of course, a modern one. It is the sort of vision addressed by psychologists and businessmen, photographers and architects, printers and the artists of the avant-garde.[122] And what is worthy of note is that Sedlmayr takes this form of instantaneous perception as vision *tout court*. The notions of the *macchia*, the gestalt, the instant, the shock and the flash certainly have roots in older experiences and traditions, but new is the widespread cognitive privileging of the instant in increasing opposition to notions of contemplation or study; they cannot be thought apart from industrialisation and urban modernity, from the train driver or machine operator or from Benjamin's more circumscribed bourgeois subject of culture, 'the neurasthenic, the urban dweller, and the consumer'.[123]

Physiognomy too, however, had a particularly modern valence. The relevance of physiognomic ideas in the development of the nineteenth-century photographic archive and the disciplinary institutions is a familiar case in point.[124] Similarly, the resurgence in the popularity of physiognomic theories in Weimar Germany has been noted. But in the case of the latter it has been interpreted as a sign of irrationalism, a symptom of modernity in crisis.[125] I would argue that the sudden relevance of physiognomy has little to do with this sort of obvious and manifest crisis but reflects instead a different sort of relation of thought and experience to history. One area where this relation crystallises with a certain amount of clarity is in early film theory.

Let us look briefly at one aspect of the work of Béla Balázs, an oeuvre fascinating and complex and to which justice cannot begin to be done here. Balázs was a Hungarian intellectual who sat at the centre of Lukács's Sunday circle,

which also included Karl Mannheim, Arnold Hauser and Friedrich Antal.[126] Exiled after the involvement with Béla Kun's short-lived Hungarian Soviet Republic, Balázs survived as a journalist in Vienna, where he found his *métier*, film criticism. It is in Vienna that Balázs wrote *Der sichtbare Mensch*, perhaps the first sophisticated treatise on the aesthetics of film; in 1926 he relocated to Berlin, where he continued his criticism (resulting in his 1930 *Geist des Films*) as well as writing screenplays. At the time, Balázs's film criticism was certainly more widely read and influential than Kracauer's. And if less intellectually ambitious than Kracauer, Balázs is interesting for the weave of discourses and practices that run through the work of this important but impoverished philosopher, journalist, activist of the left and filmmaker. For our purposes, the interest of his theoretical work lies in the way the most widely read and popular German-language theory of film is permeated by, and based upon, the kind of physiognomic theory that served Sedlmayr so poorly.

Look at the following passage and consider the way it both echoes and anticipates statements we recognise. I will allude to a larger range of resonances later, but already it is worth noting that it is written by someone who knew László Moholy-Nagy well, and who met Benjamin later. Yet these ideas can hardly be reduced to such accidents of acquaintance and readership, as the same narrative of affective decline is found in Sedlmayr and others. But, as for Moholy-Nagy and Benjamin of the mid-1920s, it is the printed word that stands at the beginning:

> With time, the invention of the art of printing books has made the human face illegible. Men have read so much on paper that they have been able to neglect this other form of communication.[127]
>
> Our expressive surface has been reduced to the countenance. . . . Our countenance is now like a small, helpless, exposed semaphore of the soul, giving signals as well as it can . . . For earlier, man was visible in his whole body. In the culture of the word, however, the soul . . . has become invisible. This is the result of the printing press. . . .[128]
>
> Yet it is not only the human body that has atrophied due to its neglect as an organ of expression [*Ausdrucksorgan*], but also the soul, which could have been expressed through it. For remember this: it is not the same spirit that is expressed here in words, there in gestures. The word's picture of the world is a complete and meaningful system in which the things not contained there are not really *missing*, just as colours are not *missing* from music even though they are not really present. But a truly complete, total system, a view of man and the world, is present in the immediate expression of movement.[129]

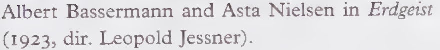
And yet not all is lost. This decline in the human ability to grasp meaning of the world and others, this half-millennium waning in experience and knowl-

Werner Pittschau and Oskar Homolka in *Dirnentragödie – Tragödie der Straße* (1927, dir. Bruno Rahn).

edge has, for Balázs, reached an end. Precisely the new technology of photography and film can bring about a revival of these 'atrophied' faculties, recreating on modern terms this lost reservoir of non-verbal knowledge:

> Now, film is about to give culture another such radical turn. Millions of people sit still every evening and experience human fates, characters, emotions and feelings of every sort optically, completely unreliant on words . . . Today, all of humanity is on the verge of relearning this utterly neglected language of expressions and gestures. It is not a substitute for words, like the language of deaf-mutes, but rather the visual correspondences of the immediately embodied soul. *Man will again become visible.*[130]

This is, of course, physiognomy, the ability to read the soul and the spirit from the body, and conversely to use the body to express the spirit and soul. In *The Visible Man*, Balázs seeks to explore the 'language of physiognomy' as one of 'mimic expression'.[131] His authorities are, among others, Aristotle, Goethe and Lavater. His recourse to such seemingly outdated notions is not some sort of shortcut for finding another, more modern essence of film; nor is it an analogy or a metaphor. In a passage originally published in a review of the documentary *Nanuk of the North*, he sees a more literal and symbiotic relation between the new technology and the older science:



Albert Bassermann and Asta Nielsen in *Erdgeist* (1923, dir. Leopold Jessner).

Pola Negri, *c.*1920.

> The greatest riddle is this: How is it possible that one understands a play of facial expressions [*Mienenspiel*] that one has never before seen? We will never get to the bottom of this and other riddles of physiognomy as long as we remain within the bounds of a physiognomic and mimic system. Just as philology can only uncover the laws of language in tandem with comparative linguistics, so must film deliver the material for comparative physiognomic research.[132]

The Visible Man is explicitly a theory of the physiognomic nature of film and of film's role in reasserting physiognomy as a valid form of knowledge, the body as a privileged organ of human expression.

Not all theories of film from the silent era rely on such a theory of physiognomy, but remarkably many, perhaps even the majority, do. And this body of thought, intensely pursued under the pressures of the commercial press and the capitalised production of film, superseded and rendered useless overnight with the arrival of the sound film, remains like a tiny, outdated and exposed semaphore of a lost but profoundly important historical moment of experience. It is a moment that cannot be measured in centuries and millennia (the age of thought before the printed book, the age of the book) but in less than a lifetime, a matter of perhaps three or four decades.

Seven years ago . . . I wrote: 'A truly new art would be like a new sense organ.' Film has now become that new organ. A new human organ for the experience of the world, one that developed rapidly. But in the meantime, this evolution, a piece of the history of mankind, seems to have been cut off. The sound film has come between us. . . . Man does not travel every stretch to the terminus; often he changes trains along the way. All transfer! Sound film!

– Béla Balázs, *Der Geist des Films* (1930)[133]

Every woman's voice on the telephone tells us whether the speaker is attractive. The tone reflects back – as self-confidence, natural ease and self-regard – all the admiring and desirous glances she has ever received . . . The ear perceives what is really the eye's, because both live on the experience of a single beauty. It is recognized on first hearing: a familiar quotation from a book never read.

– Theodor W. Adorno (1945)[134]

In terms of the development of the media – photography, phonography, radio, film – the years after Daguerre and Fox Talbot seem ones of rapid progress, with developments accelerating in the first three decades of the twentieth century to a rate so rapid it was hard for thinking to absorb new developments, to reflect, and reflect upon, them. Certainly testimony from the period bears out this sense of breathtaking technological advance. Yet one must not mistake the rapidity of these developments for continuity; in fact, it created ruptures and discontinuities that leave their marks in the thought of the time. The period between the arrival of cinema and the perfection of synchronised sound is one to which we need to attend very carefully. The silent era looked, within a year or two of its end, very much like a mere transitional period when film was an incomplete technology. But it was, in many ways, something qualitatively different, a strange and passing mutation in the experience of human presence and communication, a gulf, a chasm, an abyss between modes of encounter between human subjects. This rupture has created a fault-line through knowledge, oeuvres and concepts that can be traced in the philosophical and art-theoretical thought of the time. And if, on the example of Sedlmayr, we have followed some of these matters as part of an immanent development of the human sciences or *Geisteswissenschaften*, attending to this rupture reveals that much more is involved.

The period roughly between 1895 and 1930 saw new forms of experience, forms common, all-consuming and (in the urban West) nearly universal, forms on which visions of the future, and future knowledge, were based. This was a time when bodies did not always have voices, and suddenly voices no longer needed bodies. A voice could be transmitted in real time, but in a form detached from the body and movement that hitherto had accompanied and formed part of an utterance. The human countenance was seen closer than ever before by millions, collectively but silently. Under these circumstances, it became clear that voices might be only partially expressive, and that human communication was not necessarily discursive. By technologies of film and sound, human presence could be made immediate, but in strangely truncated forms. On the one hand, the perceivable subject could be fractured in ways that rendered the various forms of his or her expression impoverished and incomplete; on the other hand, these forms, when isolated, began to reveal a new and extraordinary kind of plenitude.

With this in mind, some important tendencies in the natural and human sciences that had built up momentum in the first decades of the century and seemed most urgent in the 1920s and '30s reveal a new facet and take on a new relevance. These tendencies comprise an intellectual terrain in which both the critical theorists and Sedlmayr were clearly at home, one which was broad and inclusive but is hard to survey today, one which I want to consider from the perspective opened up by Sedlmayr. If there is a name for this terrain, a concept whose perimeters could encompass both the shifting experiences of modernity and the various intellectual tools brought to bear on them, it was not *physiognomy* but *expression* or *Ausdruck*.

To get a sense of *Ausdruck* or expression as a field of enquiry, we need not look far from Sedlmayr's institutional home, the University of Vienna. There, from 1922 to 1938, Karl Bühler held the chair in psychology and headed the university's Psychological Institute.[135] Bühler was one of the most prominent academic psychologists of his day (his 1927 *Crisis of Psychology* probably more widely read than Heussi's *Crisis of Historicism*).[136] Bühler, whose reputation did not survive his exile after the *Anschluß*, lectured and wrote in a wide range of disciplines. His psychological work was close to that of the Berlin Gestalt School (already in 1913 he published a book on gestalt perception[137]), his laboratory was to have an important influence on pedagogy and developmental psychology, and his works on linguistics (he was close to the Prague School) were widely read and are seeing a modest renaissance today.[138] In 1933, Bühler published his *Ausdruckstheorie* or *Theory of Expression*, and even the briefest consideration of it casts considerable light on projects such as Sedlmayr's.

The *Ausdruckstheorie* is a historical account of physiognomic theory, ranging from Aristotle through Quintillian, Porta, Lavater and Carus through Piderit,

LEFT Magda Schneider in a film still from *Fräulein – Falsch Verbunden* (Wrong Number, Miss!; 1932, dir. E. W. Emo). From *Illusrierter Film-Kurier*, no. 1725, 1932.

FACING PAGE Wolfgang Klein and Josette Day in a film still collage from *Hallo Hallo! Hier spricht Berlin!* (Hello Hello! Berlin Calling!; 1931, dir. Julien Duvivier). From *Illusrierter Film-Kurier*, no. 1750, 1932.

Bell and Darwin. Bühler's account of physiognomics is historical, but his point of view self-consciously modern, showing a thoroughly Balázsian sense of modern media. 'The man of today," he writes, "is surrounded by technical apparatuses that place him, like silent film, before the task of perceiving visual expression in isolation from aural expression; or, in the case of radio and telephone, the task of perceiving aural expression isolated from visual.'[139] Similarly to Balázs, Bühler sees the advent of these media as creating the conditions under which older theories can be subjected to modern means of verification: 'The new technical means of recording (film, gramophone, sound film) have put modern research into expression in the position of choosing experimental conditions . . . without sacrificing an exact determination of the processes of expression. Not to mention the huge quantity of material . . . provided by the film industry that begs for psychological consideration.'[140]

It is precisely the ability of these media to provide material as well as modes of analysis that Bühler sees as decisive to the research into expression. 'When one goes to the cinema today and sees, on the screen, the constant reappearance of a few dozen fleeting gestures in the characters' gaits, their heads and hands, their eyes and mouths . . . and then studies a modern treatise such as

Nummer 1750

Illustrierter

Film-Kurier

14. Jahrgang 1932

Hallo Hallo!

Hier spricht Berlin!

The actress Anna May Wong. From Lothar Brieger, *Das Frauengesicht der Gegenwart* (Stuttgart: Enke, 1930).

Lersch's *Gesicht und Seele* ("Face and Soul") – one sees how practice and scientific interest intersect.'[141] Philipp Lersch was, of course, the authority on which Sedlmayr based his physiognomic notion of the 'endothymic base'; he was also one of the most prominent researchers into expression to explore the evidence of gesture and movement by means of photography. Indeed, Lersch and his followers were wont to compare laboratory images to historical works of art, basing their equation on the seeming congruence of the bodies portrayed. (A certain Hermann Strehle, for example, went to Wölfflin's chapter on 'Closed vs. Open Form' in the *Principles of Art History* to corroborate behaviour revealing emotional openness.)[142] Bühler, like Sedlmayr, also took the work of Ernst Kretschmer seriously. For Bühler, Kretschmer allowed the possibility of verification of certain, though by no means all, aspects of the ancient theory of temperaments on the basis of psychochemistry and morphological indices.[143]

Sedlmayr would have known the work of the gestalt psychologist and *Ausdruckstheoretiker* Karl Bühler, whose effect on art historians in Vienna Ernst Gombrich has described eloquently.[144] Sedlmayr does not cite Bühler, probably because he did not share a particular position or require a particular point. Bühler's work, however, shows that Sedlmayr's own, seemingly motley mix of sources and concerns was held together by a specific logic and set of

problems defined under the term 'expression'. It shows that Sedlmayr's physiognomic project was part of a specific academic discourse and would have been recognised as such, for the first half of the twentieth century saw an enormous amount of intellectual activity in the area of expression, works from the popular to the scholarly, works that now look quaint or occult. This efflorescence has been noted but not adequately explored. Most often, it is related to theories of race and dismissed as yet another of the irrationalist tendencies of the time.[145] Studies of expression in psychology were legion: from the Vienna institute came works such as Auguste Flach's *Die Psychologie der Ausdrucksbewegung*,[146] from Köhler and Wertheimer's Berlin institute came, in fact, Rudolf Arnheim's doctoral dissertation on the *Ausdrucksproblem*.[147] The works of Kretschmer and others on character and body types, especially in criminology, are also well known. But the active areas of characterology, graphology, chiromanty, personality psychology and others where the terms *Ausdruck* and *Physiognomik* were regularly employed are part of the same phenomenon.

There are two linked aspects of the kind of knowledge that the concept of *Ausdruck* opened up to which I would like to draw attention here. Both can be understood as involving a new privileging of corporeal or *physiognomic* over conceptual or *discursive* knowledge.

The first is that knowledge of humans came to be considered in a wide variety of contexts to be radically embodied. The body was no longer merely an object of science (or of desire) but instead bore the full weight of subjectivity, a subjectivity whose primary medium of expression was what Balázs so astutely called the *visible man*. In his words:

> Someone not speaking can still be bursting with things that can only be expressed in forms, images, facial expressions and gestures. The man of a visual culture does not simply replace words with gestures. . . . He is not thinking in words, whose syllables he writes in the air like Morse code. His gestures are not in any way concepts, but rather show, without mediation, his irrational self; and what is expressed in his countenance and movements comes from a level of the soul that can never be brought to light by words. Here mind is immediately made body, wordlessly, visually.[148]

The mute body, pregnant with meaning and perhaps even generating it, came to stand, among many thinkers of the visual, for a form of knowledge and expression that was not bound by the limits of concepts or the rules of discourse, which involved awareness of registers of experience and knowledge originating more from the body and its interaction with the world than with an isolated mind and its reflection upon it.

The notion of expression and the change from a discursive to a physiognomic conception of meaning it implied were, as I have said, part and parcel

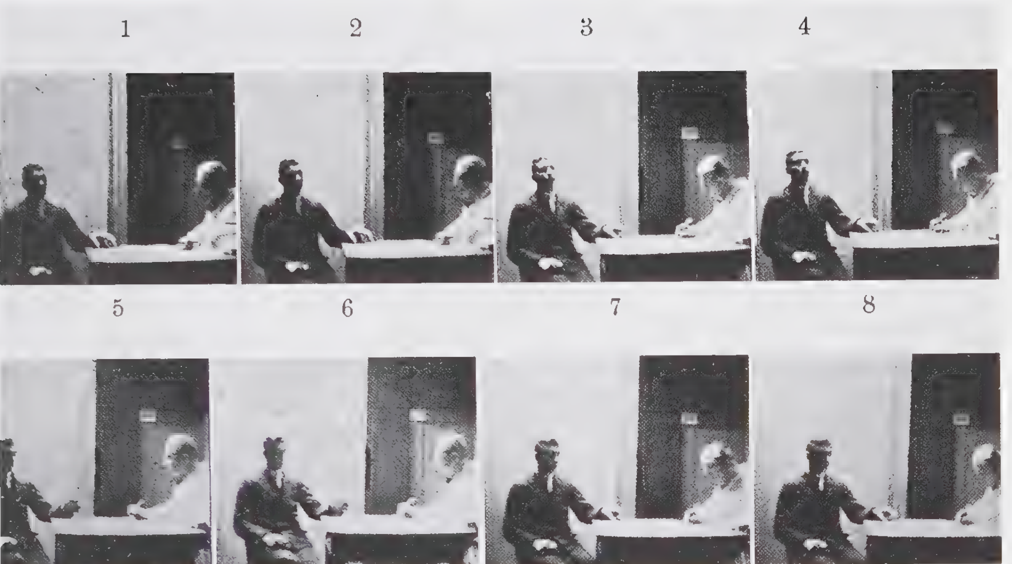
LEFT From Wölfflin, *Kunstgeschichtliche Grundbegriffe.*

FACING PAGE From Hermann Strehle, *Analyse des Gebarens: Erforschung des Ausdrucks der Körperbewegung* (Berlin, 1935).

of changes beyond this specific problematic. Balázs himself was acutely aware of filmic physiognomy's new overlap with linguistics, and in turn linguistics' connection with developmental psychology:

> Modern philology and the historical study of languages have determined that the origin of language is in *expressive movement* [*Ausdrucksbewegung*]. In other words, a person who begins to speak (like the small child) moves tongue and lips the same way as he moves his hands and the muscles of his face, and thus, originally, without the intention of producing tones. The movements of the tongue and lips are, at the beginning, gestures just as spontaneous as any other expressive movement of the body. That sound is produced is a secondary phenomenon. . . . The immediately visible mind [*Geist*] was then translated into a mediated, audible mind; and in the process, as in any translation, much is lost. But the language of gestures is the mother tongue of humanity.[149]

In the 1920s and 1930s linguistic theory could no longer see communication as simply a semiotics of arbitrary signs; instead it began to explore again various forms of the motivation of signs. For example, Bühler, whose *Ausdruckstheorie* of 1933 was followed a year later by an ambitious *Sprachtheorie*, has respectful but deep objections to Saussure's linguistics. The latter's *Cours* was published posthumously in 1915, but the work itself was of a much earlier era (Saussure was born in 1857). Bühler describes Saussure as 'a child of his time' emerging only partially from the 'one-sided *materialism* of the nineteenth century'.[150]



Another linguist of the period sees Saussure's work as an example of 'mechanistic-materialistic linguistics'.[151] It is striking that Saussure's linguistics, published posthumously only in the silent age, was seen by the 1920s as a relic of positivism (it returned only with the popularity of structural anthropology in the post-war period, with its privileging of the systematic aspect of signification over the vagaries of communicative experience).

Balázs is in fact not a negligible figure here, for film theory is one site at which this essentially linguistic argument about the nature of meaning was played out. At one point, the argument was staged quite conspicuously between Balázs and Sergei Eisenstein.[152] Balázs's notion of filmic meaning was, of course, physiognomic, privileging the isolated and isolating image over the cut or montage. Eisenstein responded in an essay famously titled 'Béla Forgets the Scissors': 'Down with the personification of film in the individual shot, the essence of film must not be sought in the shots, but rather in the interaction between shots. . . . The expressive effect of film is the result of juxtapositions and interrelationships. And herein lies the specifics of film. A shot interprets the object only in relation to other sequences.'[153] Balázs replied with an essay whose title echoes Sedlmayr's critique of traditional art-historical interpretations of Bruegel. It is called 'No Ideograms, Please!' here Balázs calls the Soviet films with their montage sequences 'hieroglyph films'. His objection is that they deal with discursive thoughts: 'When a statue of the Tsar is torn down from a pedestal, this means the overthrow of Tsarism . . . These are signs that mean something else, like the cross . . . or the ideograms of Chinese script. Images

should not *signify* thoughts, but *create* [*gestalten*] them. . . . not symbols that are, as ideograms, already formulated in images.'[154] Here Sedlmayr's critique of an aesthetic of transcendence in favour of artistic immanence resonates as well.[155]

The period of silent film thus coincides with the re-emergence of the issue of how the visual could mean directly and in its own terms – not through a signifying system, not translated into concepts or discourse. Film made clear that the issues most often raised, in the realm of painting, by abstraction were not the only, or even the most pressing, questions in the area of the visual arts. It made clear that images of the world and its inhabitants were still important. The fact that the most popular theory of the non-figurative – Worringer's *Abstraction and Empathy* – could not discuss abstract form without reference to the body was not lost on contemporaries, who understood it as a theory of the relation of the body to the visual and the corporeal nature of response to form.

But beyond the shift in attention from discursive to physiognomic *meaning* at the time, we see a shift from a discrete, semiotic or conceptual *epistemology* to one that is embodied, mimic or mimetic. As scholars have pointed out, the human body's irreducible density was one of the major themes of nineteenth-century scientific thought, one that was called, in the wake of Wilhelm Wundt, the 'psychophysical problem'.[156] For many thinkers of the time, however, the density of the body was a problem only when considered in terms of the natural sciences instead of being used to reformulate specifically philosophical questions. For the body's own activity and steadfast refusal of transparency to the world opened a new way beyond the stale but stubborn Kantian critique, a critique which tended to turn philosophy into epistemology and epistemology into a study of the radical circumscription of knowledge. Thus, if the legacy of the nineteenth century was a picture of perception as an unreliable transmitter of the world, the flip side of this was a picture of the perceiving body and mind as a tireless generator of it. This opened the possibility of a series of moves beyond the Cartesian split between subject and object, beyond a 'peephole' theory of consciousness, and at times, indeed, beyond the monopoly held by consciousness in European philosophy.[157]

These new possibilities for a knowledge based on the interaction between an embodied subject and the world converged with, drew sustenance from, but also helped inspire some of the monuments of early twentieth-century thought; and at least in the way they can be disposed around the axis of the psychophysical problem, they are all of a piece. This can be seen, of course, in Husserl's new attention to the immediate encounter as well as in Heidegger's analytic of *Dasein* and in Scheler's attempts to overcome the subject/object divide by considering the bodily forms in which mind and world interact to

constitute the subject. I shall consider Walter Benjamin's theory of language and his doctrine of the similar in this light, alongside the Frankfurt School's critique of identity philosophy, one which occurs in reflection by means of negative dialectics but in art by the process of what Horkheimer and Adorno called *mimesis*. Gestalt psychology and studies of expression were part of this same reconfiguration of knowledge. If one attaches importance to generations, it was a reconfiguration carried through largely by thinkers who had a running start before the end of the First World War and whose projects were carried out in the inter-war years. Yet these projects did not, by and large, continue on their original trajectory into the second half of the twentieth century and thus constitute another gap, another blind spot. Sedlmayr was part of this generation, and he took seriously the questions of these invisible years. From the perspective of an acutely felt crisis of historicism, he had a good sense of the various ways out of the neo-Kantian bind. He realised that images raised new possibilities; that they could be examples of knowledge of a different sort, or objects of a different sort of knowledge; that this knowledge would not be distilled and denatured into concepts but had a form that was purely visual, limited to, but laden with, another sort of meaning. He realised that this sort of knowledge, total and embodied, raised questions that needed to be asked. Yet he could not always formulate these questions effectively and fell into the traps that theories of expression held open to the unprepared, traps to which, in post-1945 historiography, they have been reduced. Perhaps this should not be held against him too much, for within the history of art, he had relatively little help.

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The second aspect of the development of theories of expression, the shift of models of meaning and their relevant epistemologies, concerns the way in which all this was played out discursively. This broad move gave new validity to forms of knowledge that are not, and were not, always considered respectable. With this shift of paradigms, certain historical continuities of thought, of schools and lines of inquiry were suddenly broken and new starting points were established *ad hoc* from surprisingly disparate elements.[158] In his *Ausdruckstheorie*, for example, Bühler stresses repeatedly the strange temporality of the bodies of knowledge that he deploys, the problems of anachronism that accompany new media as they reopen forms of experience considered worthy of study in the past.[159] An even more striking example of the historical imbrication of the discourse of expression is the work of Ludwig Klages, populariser of the notion of *Ausdruck* and a reference point for psychologists, art historians such as Sedlmayr, linguists and philosophers at the time. Klages

made his living as a graphologist before his publicistic work became more prominent, and he published widely on graphology, characterology and physiognomy (best known are his *Expressive Movement and Creative Power* and *Handwriting and Character*).[160] He emerged from the circle around Stefan George in the 1890s Munich *bohème*, one of the apostate '*Kosmiker*' to break with the master.[161] His major works – *On the Cosmogonic Eros*, *On the Nature of Consciousness*, *The Mind as Enemy of the Soul*[162] – are based on a mystic notion of the reality of primordial 'images', for Klages the stuff of thought and the means of human cognition of the world and the cosmos. The 'soul', which is the sum of a human's unmediated experience, has access to this level of reality, but it is one blocked by the conscious 'mind' or *Geist*. Mind is the cognitive organ that reduces the world to concepts and quantities, that reifies. It is limited but useful. Its fate in the West, however, is that it is the tool of a sort of Schopenhauerian will, a will that leads to a means–end rationality of conceptual thought whose purpose is the domination of nature.

The appeal of Klages's thought as a form of romantic anti-capitalism is clear. Indeed, he anticipates many of environmentalism's concerns from the late twentieth century as well as Horkheimer's and Adorno's notion of the dialectic of enlightenment. Benjamin's interest in Klages and the help this work provided in theorising the 'aura' are well known.[163] More surprising, however, is the extraordinarily high regard in which the mystical anti-Semite Klages was hold in the academy, one of the many institutions of the 'mind' that he scorned. The contributors' list to his *Festschrift* of 1932 reads like an interesting cross section of the advanced thought of the time in both the natural and human sciences.[164] Karl Bühler was only one of many serious scholars who was unstinting in his praise of Klages.[165] Klages's writings had tremendous importance in areas from philosophy and psychology to politics and cultural criticism, not to mention the German Youth Movement. His own claim that 'I am the most plundered author of the present' is probably not far off the mark.[166]

But a look at Klages's work only reinforces one's surprise. It is of a strange and different era, and it is of a kind that would no longer, one would think, survive the tests of legitimacy imposed by the university and related institutions. It combines reflection, introspection and the evidence of ancient philosophy, medieval science, literature and myth, the sort of mixture of hearsay, authority and folk wisdom that is ordinarily associated with debased notions of physiognomy. Klages mixes registers of thought into theories with claims to philosophical truth, theories given their rigour only internally and in their identification of a very specific object of knowledge – non-conceptual cognition and its communication. But the high regard in which he was held is indicative of this new terrain of knowledge and its uncomfortable modernity. The work of Klages indicates with scandalous clarity something hinted at by Sedlmayr,

Balázs and others at the time: that if film and photography created new forms of perception, forms mediated by the machine and corresponding to the experience of the subjects of urban modernity, they also reopened access to earlier forms of experience and encouraged recourse to earlier forms of knowledge. These bodies of knowledge and experience were no longer sanctioned or recognised by the academy; they were forms that lived on in the less reputable zones of knowledge, that drew upon the forgotten, the occult, the superstitious, the sort of knowledge handed down, reused but not theorised, the kind of knowledge sedimented in language and proverb. We could call this a sort of vulgate of experience that has survived, even to a certain extent today, but which looks, when systematised, very odd, certainly unscientific, possibly mad. It is this sort of knowledge that looks so strange when it is encountered in Sedlmayr, so scurrilous when found in Benjamin, so surprising when found in respectable academics such as Scheler and Bühler.

The work of Hans Sedlmayr is particularly revealing when it comes to the possibilities and dangers of this terrain of thought that can be identified by the word *Ausdruck* and which included the notions of mimesis or physiognomy, this new route of understanding the visual that the history of the twentieth century cut off before its terminus was reached. But before leaving him, it is worth summarising Sedlmayr's strange and compelling modernity. We have seen, in his favour, that his deployment of physiognomy as well as gestalt psychology makes good sense considering the state of the historiography of art in the 1920s; it represents an occasionally sophisticated response to the crisis of historicism in the light of developments in philosophy and psychology. Also to his credit, in terms of the exploration of physiognomic versus discursive meaning and in its approach to a mimetic versus a semiotic epistemology, it is close to the forefront of continental thought at the time. And finally, it was developed in awareness of, and was deeply affected by, developments in photography and film.

In his *Threepenny Lawsuit*, Brecht pointed out that new technologies had as powerful effect on older media as they did on the newer ones they called forth.[167] In his Artwork essay, Benjamin extends this insight, showing that the new technologies have an effect on older artefacts themselves. Technical reproduction presides over the decline of the aura even in historical works; the cult value at the core of an ancient object no longer exists in modernity. Consciously or not, Sedlmayr put this insight into practice. His blind men are neither those of Bruegel's sixteenth century, nor those of Riegl's or Dvořák's long nineteenth century. They are figures that could only emerge in the age of photography and film, figures in a painting bearing the date 1568 that could not, however, exist before the twentieth century, a painting newly reconstituted and utterly modern. Sedlmayr sought not only to bring the lessons of artistic modernism

and philosophical modernity into the history of art, but also to negotiate the relationship between modern technologies of the visual and the artefacts of a historically distant point in time. In effect, this learned guardian of the sciences of art granted Balázs's wish: he welcomed film into the exalted academy.

But at the same time, Sedlmayr shows the unstable and inconsistent way in which bodies of knowledge were mixed and, indeed, mismatched at this critical junction. It is true that the boundaries between these kinds of knowledge were unclear and being redrawn, but he seemed blissfully unaware of the game he was playing. To answer the question of whether there is anything to be rescued from Sedlmayr's work, I would like now to turn to the work of Walter Benjamin and Theodor W. Adorno, for they explored some of the same terrain and were comfortable there. Pursuing this point will, I hope, make their work appear less idiosyncratic than it has hitherto seemed. The difference from Sedlmayr is that Benjamin and Adorno realised that in entering this terrain they were exploring what could be called enemy territory, one full of traps both philosophical and political. Following their work there will allow us to trace a shifting intersection between critical theory and the history of art, one that has a specific logic of its own.

Physiognomies of Art and Language

> *Are you familiar with Heinz Werner's* Sprachphysiognomik *["Physiognomy of Language"], which Barth published in 1932? I am studying it at the moment.*
>
> – Walter Benjamin, letter to Gershom Scholem, 18 January 1934[168]

Hans Sedlmayr's history of art was an ambitious project built around the conceptual tools of both modernity and modernism, the tools of the era of photography and film. Walter Benjamin's theories of photography and film were informed by a deep interest in the historiography of art. Both were concerned to push beyond the dead-end of a passive historicism whose borders were patrolled and whose claims were edited by the epistemological pessimism of neo-Kantianism. Their work was driven by the conviction that there was an unmediated truth-content available in the work of art that could be released in the present by rigorous attention to the object; they opposed this to a view that the work of art offered simply a pale reflection of something else, the dead spirit or world-view governing historically variable modes of ordering visual representation. And both looked to the work of Alois Riegl for a model of such a science of the image.

Their Riegl – there were many that could be constructed from the oeuvre held together by that name – was the same one. He was not the Hegelian philosopher of art history whom Sedlmayr thought he recognised in 1925 (and who did not play a significant role in Sedlmayr's later work), but rather the one that who informed the second, or 'rigorous', study of art and who set what I have called the physiognomic challenge. As we have seen, they shared, in the wake of Riegl, a monadological view of the work of art, one that finds in the immanence of the individual work the totality beyond it, and that immanent whole in every tiny detail. Riegl, wrote Benjamin, 'penetrates so far into the historical conditions that he is able to trace the curve of their heartbeat as the line of their forms'.[169] And it is Riegl who inspired Benjamin's goal of 'an analysis of the work of art which recognises in it an integral expression (*Ausdruck*) – one not limited by the boundaries of the various domains of culture – of the religious, metaphysical, political and economic tendencies of the epoch.'[170] Describing his *Strenge Kunstwissenschaft* inspired by Riegl's formalism, Sedlmayr writes that 'virtually the entire historical situation is concentrated' in the individual work, and that there a 'lost historical situation is revived to immediate experience in a complete and concentrated way'.[171]

Both Benjamin's and Sedlmayr's reception of Riegl have been studied in detail; the point here is that they are so strikingly similar, and so similarly idiosyncratic. I have argued that Sedlmayr's view is not only informed by theories that went by the name 'physiognomy' but that they are physiognomic through and through; that a physiognomics of a potentially disreputable sort is not merely a late mutation in his work but rather the vanishing point of an oeuvre dominated by this specific problematic. If, following John Graham, a physiognomic view of the world is defined as one that stresses the irreducible uniqueness and indivisibility of its elements and insists on the unmediated presence of the nature and character of the whole in every visible part, do we then want to consider the Rieglian aspect of Benjamin's work under this same rubric?

The mystical, theological or occult aspects of Benjamin's early concerns are well established. Recently, however, it has become clear how these interests carried through into the later work in important ways. Benjamin maintained an active interest in physiognomic issues throughout his career, reviewing books on graphology and even performing extensive graphological analyses.[172] In the curriculum vitae of 1928 quoted above, in which he described his methodological debt to Riegl, Benjamin continued by writing that 'such an approach seems to me to be a precondition for any effective physiognomic understanding of those aspects of artworks that make them incomparable and unique. To that extent it is closer to an eidetic way of observing phenomena than to an historical one.'[173] Rolf Tiedemann has discussed how the *Passagen-Werk* was meant to be a grand example of 'materialist physiognomics':

> Physiognomics infers the interior from the exterior; it decodes the whole from the detail; it represents the general in the particular. Nominalistically speaking, it proceeds from the tangible object; inductively it commences in the realm of the intuitive. The *Passagen-Werk* 'deals fundamentally with the expressive character [*Ausdruckscharakter*] of the earliest industrial products, the earliest industrial architecture, the earliest machines, but also the earliest department stores, advertisements, and so on.' In that expressive character, Benjamin hoped to locate what eluded the immediate grasp: the *Signatur*, the mark, of the nineteenth century.[174]

Tiedemann has also noted how Benjamin's notion of the relation of economy to culture flies in the face of Marxist conceptions. 'If the infrastructure,' Benjamin mused in his notes,

> determines the superstructure, but if such determination is not reducible to simple reflection, then how should it be characterised? As its expression [*Ausdruck*]. The superstructure is the expression of the infrastructure. The economic conditions under which society exists come to expression in the superstructure, precisely as, with the sleeper, an overfull stomach finds not its reflection but its expression in the contents of dreams which, from a causal point of view, it may be said to 'condition.'[175]

This, of course, is utterly incompatible with any Hegelian or Marxist demand for mediation. *Ausdruck*, Jürgen Habermas has written,

> is a category of Benjamin's theory of experience; it is related to those insensible correspondences between animate and inanimate nature upon which the physiognomical gaze of the child and of the artist rests. Expression, for Benjamin, is a semantic category that is more akin to what [Rudolf] Kassner or even Klages intended than to the base-superstructure theorem.[176]

I want to put pressure on this 'physiognomic' aspect of Benjamin's work. Can this be taken seriously, even literally? Does considering Benjamin's work as a historical physiognomy of art along the lines opened up by Sedlmayr help to illuminate it? Does it allow us to criticise, or perhaps even redeem, some of its more opaque aspects? I think that it does some of these things, and that considering these aspects in the light of the role that physiognomy and the science of expression played in the human sciences at the time can make it seem considerably less strange.

*

Like so many students in the 1910s, Benjamin was grappling with the legacy of Kant. He was searching for a way in which he could transform and extend Kant's epistemology as a way out of the philosophical stalemate associated with his name at the time. And he succeeded, at least to the extent of defining a project that would govern his work from then on. This, in any case, is the convincing argument that Howard Caygill has recently made concerning Benjamin's 1918 text 'On the Programme of the Coming Philosophy' and others in the preceding years. Here Benjamin confronts head-on the limitations of Kant's notion of experience: 'The reality with which, and with the knowledge of which, Kant wanted to base knowledge on certainty and truth is a reality of a low, perhaps the lowest, order.'[177] Though 'Kant wanted to take the principles of experience from the sciences, in particular mathematical physics . . . experience itself and unto itself was never identical with the object realm of that science.'[178] Benjamin lets Kant off the hook here; the problem is that the neo-Kantian conception of experience in its entirety had been reduced to the transcendental conditions by which Kant could analyse it. In other words, Benjamin asserts the possibility of kinds of experience that do not conform to the Kantian conditions of forms of intuition (space and time), the categories of understanding and the ideas of reason. This finite, limited kind of experience represents, in Caygill's words, 'but one of a number of possible infinite but bounded surfaces of experience'.[179] Benjamin wants to consider the hypothetical experience of an absolute that is immanent to another of these bounded surfaces – that is, he opens up the possibility of a metaphysics. And he asserts the possibility of a kind of experience that is not characterised by the gulf between a subject and the object he can only know phenomenally through the forms of intuition. These points can be simplified and summed up by saying that Benjamin was convinced of the possibility of experience of a kind that the institutionally sanctioned, codified knowledge of the academy could not analyse, account for, or even conceive. Benjamin's 'speculative concept of experience'[180] quite naturally took him to the less respectable areas of knowledge, to its outer borders. He was, of course, notoriously comfortable in these disreputable zones – in the restricted sections of libraries, with his collection of children's books, talking to charlatans, gathering kitsch in the flea markets of the modern city and of the modern mind.

In the 1910s, Benjamin explored this speculative conception of experience on the example of colour, its possibility of an intensive infinity and of a kind of 'pure seeing' in which the object and organ of vision could collapse; his example was the eye in the rainbow.[181] He also explored this conception of experience in the realm of language. For Benjamin, experience is not necessarily, or even primarily, linguistic. Language, however, becomes a focus of his attention. There are signs of the possibility of an immanent absolute within lan-

guage; there are traces of sorts of experience other than the conceptual or traditionally linguistic. Language turns out to be the surface on which can be found residues of the intersection with other planes of experience.

The notion of language as a field containing traces of other planes of experience is developed in a set of texts that span across a long period of Benjamin's career (and which thus attest to the continuity of his concerns). This aspect of Benjamin's thought is of compelling interest on its own terms, offering a visionary view of mankind's historical existence in the world and his changing possibilities of knowledge. More important in this context, however, is that it represents Benjamin's personal version of the interwoven issues of experience and communication that went by the name of *Ausdruck* or 'expression' in this period.

In his 'On Language as Such and on the Language of Man' of 1916, Benjamin develops a notion of language as exceeding the linguistic; indeed, the linguistic, or the 'language of man', is but a special case of language broadly defined. 'Language . . . means the tendency inherent in the objects concerned . . . toward the communication of the contents of mind. To sum up: all communication of the contents of mind is language, communication in words being only a particular case of human language.'[182] Language as Benjamin defines it inheres in objects of all kinds; it is the content of all the world in its plenitude: 'The existence of language, however, is coextensive not only with all areas of human mental utterance in which language is always in one sense or another inherent, but with absolutely everything. There is no event or thing in either animate or inanimate nature that does not in some way partake of language.'[183] Language 'as such' – here is where Benjamin's thought enters the heterogeneous field of contemporary discourse and leaves the area of theology and romantic theory – is defined precisely as 'expression': 'All that is asserted here is that all expression [*Ausdruck*], insofar as it is a communication of the contents of mind, is to be classed as language. And expression [*Ausdruck*], in its whole and innermost essence, is certainly to be understood as *language*.'[184] The language of nature is one that captures all of these 'contents', the 'transcausal connectedness of all things'.[185] The language of man is a fallen one; like experience through the spectacles of the Kantian critique, language as we know it is language of 'a low, perhaps the lowest, order'. It deals with concepts as opposed to 'contents' that exceed them; it is denotative, merely communicative and instrumental; it occupies the realm Klages associates with the limitations of *Geist* or 'mind' and not the plenitude of the soul's experience. It is language *for* man, and not the language *of* the world.

In two texts of 1933, Benjamin revisited these themes. The timing here is interesting: this was in the wake of Hitler's seizure of power, when Benjamin entered his long and painful period of exile. These texts, 'The Doctrine of the

Similar' and 'On the Mimetic Faculty', show close proximity to the kind of thinking that can be characterised as, or was called upon by, physiognomics, and they suggest the relevance of these themes to the political issues with which Benjamin was grappling at the time. Writing explicitly of his foray into 'occult knowledge', he describes the supersensuous connections, the 'natural correspondences' between the objects of the world as 'similarity'.[186] The process of perceiving the similarities of nature no longer plainly visible to man he calls *mimesis* or *mimicry*: 'Nature produces similarity – one need only think of mimicry.'[187] But since most similarities are now 'nonsensuous', no longer available to experience, the task of the mimetic faculty is largely that of following clues and decoding. Mankind's language of words, writes Benjamin, is an 'archive of nonsensuous similarities';[188] every word contains clues to correspondences of various kinds, marks the intersection of the current plane of experience with those others to which one no longer has access. 'If words meaning the same thing in different languages,' he writes, 'are arranged about that signified as their centre, we have to inquire how they all – while often possessing not the slightest similarity to one another – are similar to the signified at their centre. Such an understanding is of course related in the most intimate way to mystical or theological theories of language, without, however, being alien to empirical philology.'[189] By that token, all words, in which similarity is inherent in various ways, including those mediated by the semiotic function of signs, are also onomatopoetic at some level. Letters, or the 'script images' (*Schriftbilder*), he writes, might in fact register similarities more clearly than the spoken word.[190]

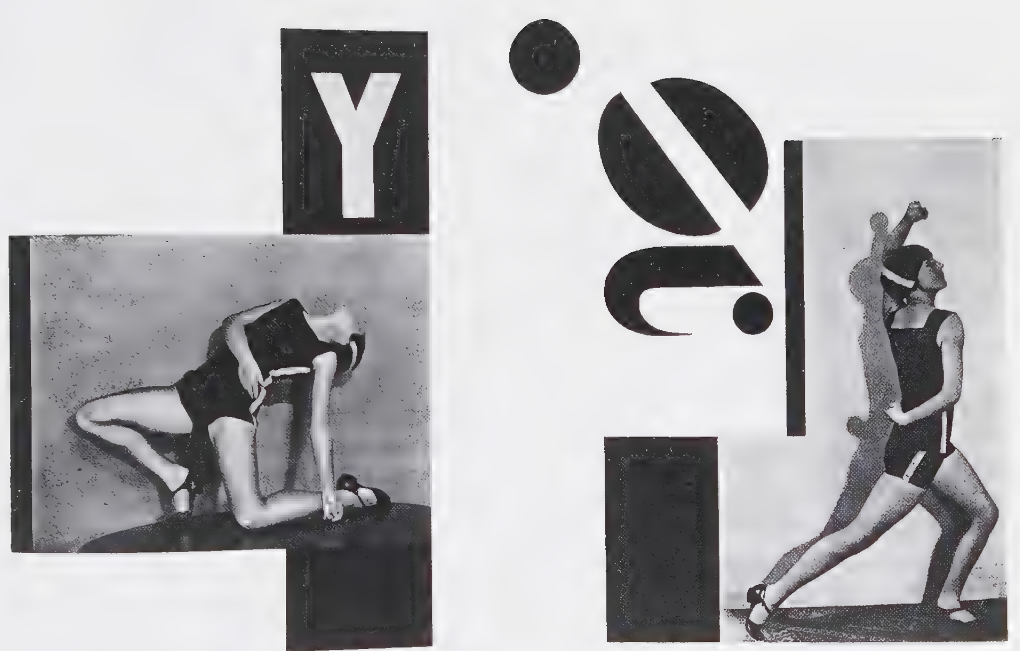
But the root of the mimetic faculty is one more properly *mimic*. It is not just a passive ability to recognise similarity but an active form of behaviour, that of *producing* similarity. This behaviour is characterised as the ability physically to assimilate oneself to the world: 'The very greatest capacity for the generation of similarities . . . belongs to human beings. . . . Children's play is everywhere permeated by mimetic modes of behaviour [*mimetischen Verhaltungsweisen*], and its realm is by no means limited to what one person can imitate in another. The child plays at being not only a shopkeeper or teacher but also a windmill and a train.'[191]

Benjamin's notions of similarity and the mimetic faculty put him very close to many aspects of physiognomic thought we have looked at earlier. For Sedlmayr, 'the organ for the grasp of visible character has atrophied in most people';[192] and for Balázs, 'the human body . . . has atrophied due to its neglect as an organ of expression [*Ausdrucksorgan*].'[193] For Benjamin too, the history of the mimetic faculty is one of the steadily decreasing ability of mankind to perceive a full range of experience and to interact with the world in any but an instrumental way: 'The sphere of life that formerly seemed to be governed by

the law of similarity was much larger,' he writes; 'Our gift for seeing similarity is nothing but a weak rudiment of the once powerful compulsion to become similar and behave mimetically.'[194] Klages and others stressed the capacities of earlier cultures for physiognomic knowledge. For Benjamin too 'the perceptual world of modern human beings seems to contain far fewer of those magical correspondences than did that of the ancients or even that of primitive peoples.'[195] Interestingly, linguists, developmental and gestalt psychologists of the time, crossing the very same discourse zone of 'expression', also stressed the ontogenetic and phylogenetic priority of this lost form of knowledge growing out of mimetic interaction with the world.[196]

It should be borne in mind that such ideas about 'expression' as a way to gain access to supersensuous experience were a commonplace, even cliché, of the vernacular aesthetics of the time. The revival of artistic dance, often called '*Ausdruckstanz*' at the time, is part of this, as was the early twentieth-century craze for 'eurythmics' as a form of interpersonal 'sympathy'. Benjamin echoes this in an early draft of the essay 'On the Mimetic Faculty', in a passage in which he seems to let down his guard, that reserve by which he tended to insulate his work, making it seem more original (or preserving, by slight recasting, the potential for original use). 'Ornament,' he writes, 'is closely related to dance. It represents instruction in the production of similarities. (One would have to relate this to Worringer's *Abstraction and Empathy*.) On the other side, when interpreting dance one cannot ignore its dynamic side – the transfer of energy to weapons, tools, spirits. Perhaps this stands in a dialectic relation to the mimetic behavior (*mimetische Verhaltungsweise*) of the dancer.'[197] In relating ornament to dance like Kracauer, Benjamin reveals the way in which the concerns of *Ausdruck* exceed those of 'expressionism', of vitalism, of the aesthetics of bodily pathos and the infinite nuances of changing corporeal states. One thinks of Karel Teige's extraordinary constructivist photomontage illustrations for Vítězslav Nezval's *Abeceda* of 1926, in which letters are explored in their pictorial expressiveness, and this is compared to expressive dance in which the letters are mimed.[198] The hard edges of the cold alphabetical geometry in no way clash with the bodily texture of human life; the flowing robes of rhythmical dance need only be replaced by the Spartan, no-nonsense athletic suit of the dancer. The fluid, expressive, emotive and motivated is confronted with the discrete, standardised, abstract arbitrariness of the repeatable sound unit represented by the letter. The stock of the many physiognomies of language and other arts stood high at the time.

It is important, however, to be careful here. Outlining such affinities tends almost inevitably to reduce productive, even radical, innovation to the existing



'Y' and 'G.' Karel Teige, photomontage illustrations for Vitezslav Nezval, *Abeceda* (Prague, 1926).

features of the field in which it erupts (and, most often, into which it then quickly sinks). Yet I think we do need to consider the similarities between Benjamin's work and others that he recognised as related to his own, and I would like to do so under two rubrics. First, aspects of Benjamin's work are clearly involved in a *physiognomic theory of language*; here I see it as a circumspect and theologically oriented version of ideas that were in wide circulation at the time. Second, these aspects represent a *theory of mimetic behaviour*, and here I see Benjamin's contribution to contemporary debates to be far more original and bold.

*

Grundfragen der Sprachphysiognomik ('Fundamentals of the Physiognomy of Language') is the title of a book published by J. A. Barth – Ludwig Klages's publisher – in 1932. Here we find formulations strikingly similar to Benjamin's own. Benjamin read the book in the autumn or early winter of 1933.[199] (It was also of interest to Sedlmayr, who cited from the preparatory articles appearing

in the years before.[200]) As far as we know, the 'Doctrine of the Similar' was written in the first two months of that year; the essay on the 'mimetic faculty' as late as September. Direct influence or exchange is not at issue here, however; the affinities, dramatic as they are, are plausibly explained by the fact that the two authors have some of the very same concerns, those subsumed under the term 'expression' (and both shared a deep interest in the work of Ludwig Klages). Werner's use here is in the way that he shows the concepts and problematics available to theorists of culture at the time, and how they could be combined in a constellation that was the same as Benjamin's. Werner also maps the field of the study of 'expression' in a way that points to Benjamin's more speculative work of the 1930s.

Werner defines, like many others at the time, the 'physiognomic grasp' as one that captures a totality that cannot be inferred from the sum of its parts:

> Before one realizes that an object has specific characteristics . . . he comprehends the whole of the object; by sight he grasps the characteristic organism of, say, a flower before he recognizes the hallmarks of the species; he grasps the inner movement, from root to the calyx and the flower, that reveals the law of its characteristic growth. This inner . . . vitality, which is a quality of all things to the extent that they 'speak' to us, is together felt as the 'expression' of things. These things lose their expression as soon as we grasp them conceptually, to analyse them, to emphasize their qualities in an abstract way.[201]

This 'physiognomic grasp' does not merely precede abstract thought temporally but is instead an alternative form of cognition:

> There is no sensuous object, no sensuous quality that cannot be intuited not only conceptually-materially, but also by following its inner movement, its expression [*Ausdruck*]. It is not the case that there are, objectively, two worlds, the world of expressive objects and the world of material objects; they are rather different ways of understanding being that we are able to deploy upon the 'same' object [*verschiedene Seins-Fassungen, die wir an 'demselben' Gegenstande zu vollziehen vermögen*]: the rational-conceptual understanding and the understanding according to inner dynamic, according to expression.[202]

It is clear what Werner is describing. Like the proverbial favourite child, it has many names. It is the *Einstellung* of Sedlmayr and the gestalt psychologists, the 'mental set'; it is Imbriani's colour patch or *macchia*, that 'first *distant* impression of an object or a scene, the first and characteristic effect to imprint itself upon the eye . . . brought forth by the particular grouping of variously coloured persons and things, the moral distance we experience when we have not yet

registered the perceived object in all its detail.'[203] It is the world of Balazs's 'visible man', the world as it can be entered into by the 'mimetic faculty'; the world that cannot be grasped in concepts and which a large number of thinkers tried, paradoxically, to pin down in concepts, experiments, demonstrations, diagrams, poetry and finally mute gesture – Adorno's 'look, here!' that cannot be named, the 'blind spot' that disappears as soon as it is fixed in the gaze. It was this particular mode of perception that was seen as rediscovered in photography and film, one without which knowledge was thought to be incomplete, one characterised by the fullness of the 'soul' instead of being drained by the 'mind', one that bridges the abyss between subject and object and opens up the cage into which Kant's critique ushered human thought. In Werner's words,

> Psychology usually posits as self-evident that this objectivity, as a world of objects, is strictly separate from the world of people, that in all cases the human being stands opposite, sharply and determinately separate, from the phenomena he intuits . . . Only recently has the conviction emerged that the real activity of the soul is only partially played out in those highly articulated, highly rationalized zones; that important, perhaps the most important movements of the psyche belong to the vague, the indistinct, unarticulated, indeterminate being of the total person.[204]

And, as so often, these ideas imply a history of decline, a critique of what Werner calls 'sober-practical life' and its 'objective-technical-conceptual' thought.[205] Here, though, the issues are explored in terms of their effect on language and the human subject of language. Benjamin must have recognised many passages of the following kind, passages that describe the lapse from a language of nature to a language of man:

> If the outlook on the world is primarily one that looks for expression, then corresponding to it is a language that is produced and understood in a physiognomic sense. With the increasing theoreticization and technologization of the human world, the meaning and function of language are altered; the language of expression becomes a language of concepts. In a world of expression, language has an unmediated relation to the world of things, for after all there is here only one reality, and that is the reality of objects bearing expression. That changes when not the concrete objects but instead their abstract concepts are grasped and linguistically represented. Then every thing, every quality, all of reality becomes the sensuous example of an abstract concept.[206]

What is interesting here, in terms of the theological bent of Benjamin's philosophy of language, is that the linguistic subject is not seen as a passive recip-

ient of expression, of truth beyond the concept. In the early essay on 'Language as Such', Benjamin stays close to this romantic theology, quoting Hamann on language as the 'mother of reason and revelation' and leaving little to mediate between man and God, the profane and the sacred. Werner instead presents man as the *producer* of meanings, his interaction with the world calling forth a unity of expression. And this opens a path, one parallel to but separate from that of the gestalt psychologists, leading to a view that can encompass experience beyond the plane of Kantian immanence, beyond the pale world of the concept, without invoking, or without *necessarily* invoking, a metaphysics. The organ of reception of these expressions is not the spiritual substance that can be confused with consciousness or the mind, but rather the whole body, and it not only receives but actively produces meaning by the pronunciation of words, their inscription as letter, and their registration in reading. Like Benjamin's 'mimetic faculty', the production of meaning is one involving a physical assimilation to the world to be known:

> The acoustic and optical structure of the word and the sentence draw their gestural expression from the dynamic corporeality [*dynamischen Leiblichkeit*] of the creative [*gestaltenden*] subject. The articulation of the acoustic and optical images proceeds through, and as a result of, the organization of the body. Here the specific motorlinguistic articulation – which is both physical and aural – is the mediator between the psychophysically neutral level and the sphere of differentiated meanings. Thus it can occur that the intuition of a word, by means of acoustic-motor action, can appear as a projection of the physical dynamic.[207]

Words assume their meaning from the physical act of uttering them, from their *Sprachgebärde* or linguistic gesture,[208] and the written word is the 'linguistic gesture made visible'.[209] This is, of course, not Benjamin's speculative philosophy of language. It is far more tied up in debates with other linguistic theories and an attempt to come to terms with Wundt's psychophysical problem. In any case, Werner's work illuminates the way in which Benjamin's notion of language changed from one in which the world could reveal itself to one in which humans *create* nonsensuous similarities – a new way of relating to the world, one that is intervening but not necessarily instrumental, one with a cognitive and political potential as yet unexplored.

*

Mimic Behaviour

> *One of the three hundred new PhDs from Cologne – his name was Plessner – recently held a lecture in the Kant-Gesellschaft on the epistemological significance of the philosophy of language. The level of the lecture wasn't very high, but the content was mostly quite correct. No-one spoke in the discussion except for [Arthur] Liebert, who brought the speaker down to size in the name of critical philosophy. I was perhaps the only one in the audience who might have had something to say on the matter, but I had other reasons with regard to Liebert not to speak.*
>
> – Walter Benjamin, letter to Gershom Scholem, *c.*1 December 1920[210]

The physiognomy of language gives us a sense of some of the conceptual tools and the routes through disciplines available to Benjamin in his 'materialist physiognomy' of visual form, but it does little to illuminate the precise nature and the radical ambitions of that project. Certainly Benjamin thought he was after something qualitatively different, and his objections to the *Sprachphysiognomik*, recorded in his notes from the period, were precisely that Werner limited his conclusions to the fields of psychology and linguistics.[211] But research into language is perhaps the wrong place to look in order to grasp the development of Benjamin's thought at the time. Recall the changing way he frames his speculations on experience and knowledge, first in the late 1910s writing about language, reconsidering this in early 1933 under the larger issue of similarity, and by the time he was beginning his work on the Artwork essay using the material as part of the study of the mimetic faculty. Benjamin moves from language to what it captures to the human or subjective mode of cognition. Attending to this reformulation of some of the very same ideas and considering them from the perspective of mimetic or mimic behaviour yields, in fact, a very different picture of physiognomy and the potential of this line of thought.

Early on in the *Sprachphysiognomik*, which Benjamin read so carefully, Werner refers to an 'excellent work on the interpretation of mimic expression' by the German zoologist and social philosopher Helmuth Plessner and the Dutch biologist F. J. J. Buytendijk.[212] The work was published in 1925 or 1926, and whether Benjamin read it on its publication or even bothered to follow up Werner's reference later is not at all clear. Benjamin, however, would no doubt have recognised Plessner's name. Plessner had published, in 1924, a polemical work with the title *Grenzen der Gemeinschaft*. It was a thorough critique of social theories based on the unity of spirit, theories so popular among romantic anti-

capitalists who sought alternatives to a modern condition of alienation. It is a book that Helmut Lethen has recently shown describes a Weimar period ethos of 'cool conduct' that illuminates important work from that of Benjamin and Brecht to Walter Serner and Werner Krauss. And Benjamin had also heard Plessner lecture on language and epistemology – matters dear to him – in late 1920, one of the times when he was most deeply immersed in these issues. Then, Benjamin responded testily, but by and large positively. In any case, Plessner's article of 1925/26 shows that he and Benjamin continued to trawl the same waters, Plessner doing so, perhaps, the more productively. Questions of influence aside, Plessner's work on mimic behaviour gives insight into what Benjamin might have been after in his notion of the mimetic faculty,[213] a notion that has always seemed quite resistant to analysis and has been considered in the literature – or dismissed – as part of a theory of 'linguistic magic'.[214]

'The Interpretation of Mimic Expression: A Contribution to a Theory of the Consciousness of the Other Ego' is the title of the work in question here. It is a title that situates the work within that broad and amorphous discourse of 'expression' or *Ausdruck* (indeed, Benjamin would have found here an extensive reckoning with the work of Klages, from the works on *Ausdruck* to the *Kosmogonischen Eros*). It is also a work that relates *Ausdruck* to mimesis.[215] And finally, it is one that is positioned as distant from the vague and occult as it is from the circumscription of psychology, linguistics and experimental zoology. Plessner's work shows how the physiognomic challenge can be met in a way that was not metaphysical but still eminently philosophical. (Plessner, in the wake of Max Scheler and anticipating Arnold Gehlen, calls his project 'philosophical anthropology.')

Plessner's is a richly informed discussion based on experimental science, psychological and environmental theory. He starts from an observation drawn from, but then turned against, gestalt psychology. Experiments with animals of varying complexity have shown that similarities can be reduced to gestalts, but that the same gestalts do not always elicit the same response. There is overwhelming evidence of a 'strange variable dependence between the inner state of the living being and constant object',[216] in the light of which the equation of gestalt character and stimulus breaks down. Considering the outside object as a stimulus is inadequate; the being *creates* an objective stimulus in interaction with the environment. Plessner then turns the question to the human subject as a way of trying to identify processes that bypass reasoning and perhaps consciousness: 'Is there, in the human, a kind of behaviour that, fully excluding the rational sphere, unfolds on the basis of *purely sensuous* data? Behaviour in which the strange change of the 'stimulus value' of data is shown not to be dependent on the quantitative change, and not entirely determined by a gestalt, but rather in which the response to the perceived image develops

in a combination of changing inner states and the field-structure of the environment?'[217] Plessner answers by pointing to the everyday experience that theories of physiognomy seek to account for, the 'perception of the mimic expression,' that 'original ability to perceive and understand an other, or another self [*des fremden Ichs*], which is particularly evident in the behaviour of the very young child'.[218]

By the *mimic*, Plessner means movement or bodily activity that can be meant to communicate or can be interpreted as meaningful. His work in this essay, turgid in style but undeniably elegant in conception, is to isolate this kind of movement as an object of knowledge and to develop a set of concepts to identify it. His method is phenomenological, which allows him to take into account elements of theories built upon very different bases, such as Klages's, at face value, separating phenomenon from ontology, data from metaphysics. Mime can be perceived as either expressive action (voluntary or involuntary, a symbolic physical instantiation of a meaning) or as an accompaniment to a voluntary movement (motion with a particular active goal). But the mimetic, imitating reflex of the child shows that bodily movement needs to be distinguished not in terms of voluntary versus involuntary, but as the movement of a living or vital body (*Leib* or *belebter Körper*) versus the simply psychophysical body (*Körper* or *Körperleib*) as studied in the laboratory, the physics and biochemistry of its movement. In other words, the body of the living being has qualities not yet isolated, qualities that can only be seen in behaviour. Plessner's example is the child's first step:

> Every single footstep . . . involves a huge number of interrelated bodily movements, and these are not evident to the person observing or the person walking. The child learning how to walk does not take a course in the physiology of movement, nor does he set his own machinery in motion like an engineer; instead he tries to bring his body [*Leib*] as a whole in a steady movement forward, in the form of simple previously observed actions of the *relation of the body to its surroundings.* Just as it learns walking as the form of changing the location of his self, it sees others as walking; i.e., just as it masters itself as a body [*Leib*], it perceives others both as bodies [*Leiber*] and as mere physical objects. Physical objects as systems of levers, joints and their connection are comprehensible only as specific abstractions achieved by artificially isolating observation.[219]

Plessner defines this aspect of the body that can be studied in terms of mimic expression as one that is *part of a self* and not merely the physical material *under its control*, and one that is oriented towards its environment. He calls this the 'environmental intentionality' *(Umweltintionalität)* of the body (*Leib*). This body can be known in a particular mode, that Plessner calls the level of *behav-*

iour (*das Schicht des Verhaltens*), and behaviour is defined as the dynamic relation between body and its surroundings.

'A dog,' he writes, 'that has his head thrust forward and held to the ground, runs this way and that, suddenly stops, sniffs, and then returns, hastily, breaking off its movements sharply, shows us the typical image of *searching*.'[220] The activity of searching is not something that can be defined in terms of its motor aspect, but it is not mere anthropomorphism: 'I am not projecting my sensuous experiences onto the animal . . . indulging in anthropomorphic cryptopsychology, making statements about its experience "that could only be verified if I were the animal"; I am simply determining the modal character of its receptive behaviour.'[221] Plessner, in other words, asks not a Kantian question – 'How can I know that this dog is searching for something?' – but rather a more Husserlian one – 'How is it that I *do* know that this dog is searching?' This level of behaviour (*Schicht des Verhaltens*), showing the interaction of the living body with its environment, is an area of a certain kind of intersubjectivity. It posits knowledge as a physical assimilation to the world, to the other. Here the behaviour itself and the understanding of it are of a piece, the same mode of activity. And this behaviour, which appears as an 'image', is 'directly perceptible', our reception of it as expression having a 'certainty of intuition'.

The *Schicht des Verhaltens*, the level of behaviour in which movement is mimic expression that is directly, immediately intuited. This is the physiognomist's holy grail, except for one thing: Plessner has turned physiognomy on its head (or, perhaps, back on its feet). He turns centuries of speculation into mere examples of a certain kind of behaviour, voiding the field of physiognomy of its claims to truth in order to focus attention on the embodied organ of interpretation. He is not positing the ability to understand the other self, but rather simply asserting that this sort of interpretation happens, empirically, right or wrong, every day, every time a child takes his or her first step. This direct intuition might even be reasonably reliable, but it certainly can be mistaken: Plessner has simply isolated a kind of behaviour, a mode of bodily movement, that tends to be perceived in a certain way. The variable of belief, the risk of idealism or even metaphysics, drops out of the equation. At one stroke, a sort of Archimedean point is found: physiognomy is open to materialist study and responsible philosophical exploration.

An Archimedean point, but not one that bears any resemblance to Kant's conditions of transcendental critique. Indeed, Plessner later wrote of this time of his career as one when he was 'settling accounts' with Kant and Cartesianism.[222] This kind of *Verhalten* shows that there is a level of life

> that can be subsumed neither to the material sphere of the object nor to the situation sphere of the subject . . . , but that nonetheless exists and that can,

Rembrandt, *Child Learning to Walk.* © The Trustees of the British Museum, London 2004.

> thanks precisely to this subjective-objective indifference, join these two zones of being. There has been so much effort – and not only in the natural sciences – expended in the clear separation of body and soul, material and spirit, object and subject, that it is now difficult to attempt the no less responsible . . . task of their careful rapprochement, and thus to effect a necessary liberation from oppositions, be they naïvely realistic or critical-idealistic in origin.[223]

Plessner isolates a zone of mimic expression in which there is a 'comprehensible relation between the organism and its environment', one that reveals the 'original interconnection of the living being and its surroundings'.[224] The distinction between the body as considered psychophysically and the body as a living organism that roots the whole self in its world, that is part of the self, creates the feeling 'that one can grasp an invisible world with one's hands'.[225] Plessner describes, without metaphysics, the body's knowledge of the world, the kind of knowledge – of however low an order – that bypasses concepts and abstractions, that remains concrete and direct: a direct relation between behav-

iour and cognition. This is a kind of knowledge gained not by reflection but by action; it has its limits, but is nonetheless an irrefutable, if mundane, example of the 'non-objective presentation of the imperceptible'. It sounds surprisingly like a notion of the 'mimetic faculty' of producing and perceiving 'non-sensuous similarity'. All of which lets us – tentatively, provisionally – entertain the possibility that Benjamin's theology of language, his theory of linguistic magic, can be divested of some of its mystical tone. Perhaps that is too optimistic. What can however be said, with Plessner's work in mind, is this: considered as an ontology, Benjamin's notion of mimesis is mystical, idiosyncratic, and certainly of limited use to practical knowledge and politics. Considered as an epistemology, however, as a non-Kantian theory of how people know, how they generate and manipulate meanings, it is a bold way out of a difficult impasse and also thoroughly in line with the work of other thinkers of the time. But for better or worse, Benjamin is coy. He does not want us to see this simply as an epistemology; he wants to keep his metaphysical or theological options open. He takes the border between epistemology and ontology to be analogous to the one between the self and the world, as a living, breathing, porous one. He straddles the fence. But of course, that is inherent in the intriguing notion – or is it an irritating oxymoron? – that went by the name of materialist physiognomy.[226]

The Psychophysical Problem

> *Man's body* [Leib] *and his corpus* [Körper] *place him in universal contexts. But a different context for each: with his body* [Leib], *man belongs to mankind; with his corpus* [Körper], *to God.*
>
> – Walter Benjamin, 'Outline of the Psychophysical Problem' (1922–23)[227]

One can, so to speak, 'produce' a similarity between Benjamin's notion of the mimetic faculty and Plessner's analysis of mimic expression, but there is no denying that the latter is tough going, that it follows the occasionally tedious protocols of argumentation and of the academy that Benjamin rejected (and which, in turn, had no need for him). Thus the question of whether Benjamin would have been remotely interested in Plessner's approach to mimic expression is thoroughly legitimate. Are there reasons to think that this similarity is more than superficial or accidental? All questions of priority or dialogue aside, could Benjamin have read Plessner's work as relevant to his own?

Yes, I believe so. He *could* have, though I do not know that he did. There are, in any case, similarities in their senses of the epistemological importance of the body in the world, and these are the result of the fact that they were addressing the very same problem. Indeed, they do so explicitly, both trying to find an answer to what was termed by Wilhelm Wundt and Gustav Fechner the 'psychophysical problem'. They were trying to map the zone where psychology and philosophy met, where they tread on each other's turf, where they pointed out the limits of the other's tools but could do no better, where any sort of productive synthesis proved impossible. Plessner makes clear that he was trying to find a foothold in this area using the tools of philosophy. He accepts the results of psychological experiment, but in order to isolate the level of *Verhalten* as one of 'psychophysical indifference'. In other words, he seeks to show that response to environment cannot be explained mechanistically, and thus that perception, even when it bypasses consciousness, cannot adequately be illuminated by the tools of the natural sciences. The body produces some form of knowledge that is simultaneously behaviour out of its interaction with the world before consciousness intervenes. As part of his programme of a coming philosophy built around a speculative notion of experience, Benjamin too was concerned with the relation between perception and knowledge. A look at some of Plessner's more philosophically formulated works of the 1920s shows the surprising proximity of his project to Benjamin's conception of philosophy, and a study of some of Benjamin's early notes shows that many of the same philosophical moves with regard to a consideration of the body were necessary in the wake of the psychophysical problem.

Plessner's first major work was published in 1923 – and thus after Benjamin heard him speak in Frankfurt – and was called *The Unity of the Senses: Outline of an Aesthesiology of the Mind.*[228] It was an attempt to find not a psychological answer to the psychophysical problem of the relation of body to mind, but rather a philosophical way out. 'Philosophy,' he writes,

> not the natural sciences, has been the true victim of the absence of a thorough study of perception, of the inadequate awareness of the epistemological burden that it bears. The sciences could always bring themselves back onto the right path. The formalism of Kant, however, led the theory of knowledge necessarily to an impoverishment of philosophy in terms of the contents of unmediated life, in fact to an enormous timidity in the face of reality. For everywhere, the things of nature were relegated to the jurisdiction of the natural sciences, rendering them unavailable to a non-experimental exploration.[229]

Plessner's criticism of the poverty of a Kantian approach is clearly close to Benjamin's, and both were equally aware that a solution could not be found within

critical philosophy as it was then practised. 'The alternatives between which the theorist of knowledge must choose,' writes Plessner apodictically, 'are first of all: back to Kant or forward to a new ontology.'[230] The way out is to consider the realm of experience that could be analysed by reason as 'only one approach beside others', another formulation similar to many in the 'Programme of the Coming Philosophy'.[231] For his part, Plessner focuses, like his teacher Husserl, on intuition: 'To reconsider the relation of subject to object anew, so that we do not revert to the old absurdities; and at the same time to establish the fundamental contingency of the physicists' view of the world, was and is the endeavor of a philosophy of intuition (*Anschauung*). In intuition, we have the principle by which we can bring subject and object, consciousness and object into a noncontradictory relation.'[232] Benjamin conceived of his new, post-Kantian philosophy as addressing a 'higher concept of experience'; he framed it in terms theological and occasionally occult; he sought non-sensuous similarities and tried to rethink perception through the example of the reading of the configuration of stars. Howard Caygill has explored in detail Benjamin's attention to perception, the way he constantly sought to confront perception with varying modes of cognition in ways that still amaze and confound. Plessner, however, was not concerned to astonish, perfectly happy instead to challenge academic orthodoxy and score any points on its scale of success. So instead of extending philosophy so that it could include 'soothsaying from coffee grounds',[233] Plessner describes the purpose of *Die Einheit der Sinne* as the 'attempt at a structural theory of the human person, in particular his fundamental relation to the world around him. Beyond that its goals are epistemological and metaphysical . . . As long as psychology and physiology could only hope to unite the organic relations taking account of the unity of the human person, in the parallelising methodology of psychophysics, the true intermediate realm of psychophysical neutrality . . . remained unconsidered. Thus a true understanding of the encroachment of the physical into the psychical (perception) and the psychical into the physical (expressive movement and forms) remained impossible.'[234] But both Plessner and Benjamin have the same sense of how much, philosophically, is at stake, and they describe this in much the same way. If Benjamin's notion of speculative experience led him to a metaphysically motivated theory of language as the search for the expression of non-sensuous similarities, Plessner is searching for the basis of a 'universal hermeneutic of mind or theory of expression'.[235]

For all his talk of coffee grounds, however, Benjamin's explorations do not depart entirely from the territory occupied by the academy. Instead he transposes its problems and concepts onto his own theological categories. For example, in an extraordinary fragment from the early 1920s called 'Outline of the Psychophysical Problem', he begins to work out his own solution through

careful attention to the nature of bodily experience. Here he tries to overcome the traditional Cartesian separation of body and mind, its privileging of consciousness and reason, without reducing the mind to the physics of the body as Wundt and others had done. Like Plessner's exploration of mimic behaviour, he searches for the way in which the body serves simultaneously as a mediator, even creator, of experience and knowledge; and, as shall become clear, both are concerned with understanding the relation of experience to action.

Benjamin's strategy is one that can be related to Klages's distinction between mind (*Geist*) and soul (*Seele*) at the same time as it represents a challenge to it. Benjamin considers the body in two separate forms, as *Körper* and as *Leib*. To the speaker of German, the distinction has a certain logic as well as an intuitive self-evidence: *Körper* is traditionally paired with *Geist* (mind), *Leib* with *Seele* (soul).[236] And indeed, in a work that Benjamin cites in these outlines, Klages relates the fullness of the soul to a correspondingly receptive 'living body' (*lebende Leib*) as its manifestation, and contrasts this to another aspect of the body which, when it becomes identical with the ego or mind (*Geist*), the ego that thinks and acts instrumentally, also becomes an active tool and loses its openness to the cosmos.[237] But Benjamin inverts this colloquial truism, superimposing existing ideas about the distinction between two modes of *consciousness* onto modes of *physicality*. Instead of positing kinds of bodiliness cognate to the soul and the mind, he collapses the distinction between the forms of consciousness and suggests that the distinction is instead one of bodily being.

Benjamin starts from a theological distinction between the realm of man and that of God. The mind has a place in both. Mind, writes Benjamin, is 'identical' to *Leib*; the two are 'distinct simply as forms of contemplation [*Betrachtungsweisen*], not as objects'.[238] The *Leib* is a mode of intuition, but one that deals with the forms or gestalts of the world: 'limbs and organs', 'everything of which the human being can have a gestalt perception'.[239] The mind and *Leib* combined are the 'category of its "now" [*Nu*]' in historical existence, the 'momentary manifestation as an ephemeral yet immortal being'.[240] Though not categories of the world's 'eternal contents', they are nonetheless 'the supreme formal categories of the course of world events',[241] and thus of the realm of politics. The *Leib* is the body in the world of the limited notion of experience addressed by Kant and the natural sciences.

But there are traces of other forms of experience in the world of the profane, of course; perception can lead beyond the limits of the forms that can be pinned down with concepts. Pain and pleasure are, for Benjamin, feelings that exceed the *Leib* and point beyond it. These experiences of a more eternal substance of the world are the realm of the corpus or *Körper*. 'It is now advisable for us to look around among the modes of consciousness for those to which limita-

tion is just as alien as to the states of pain or pleasure, which at their most intense culminate in intoxication [*Rausch*]. Such states include those of perception.'[242] By 'perception', Benjamin means experience that can go beyond the limits within which the natural sciences package the phenomenal world for knowledge; in particular, sight (recall that in the case of colour, the distinction between subject and object can dissolve). *Leib* is 'function'; with it one can act. It is thus, in the terms used here and developed in the 'Theologico-Political Fragment', a 'political' instrument with which one can achieve the profane goal of 'happiness' (which Benjamin does not relate to 'pleasure'). *Körper* is the receptive organ of a higher form of knowledge, 'objective in the higher sense'.[243] It exceeds the profane, instrumental physicality of *Leib*, has access to a larger realm of experience – but it cannot *act*.

Now this conceptual work – and at the moment it will appear quite arcane – was without doubt stimulated by, and worked through in the light of, the writings of Klages (which Benjamin knew and drew on elsewhere in his 'Outline').[244] But it is worth attending carefully to the way that Plessner works the same set of ideas and ultimately finds he needs to draw a similar distinction of modes of bodiliness in his own very different project.[245] In the *Einheit der Sinne* (and in his philosophical anthropology in general), Plessner also seeks to determine the distinct unity of consciousness, mind, soul and body that makes for mankind. The 'unifying principle,' he writes, 'is the relation of *Leib* and *Geist*.'[246] Here he distinguishes, as he does later in 'The Interpretation of Mimic Expression', between two kinds of body – one of expression (*Ausdruck*) and one of action (*Handlung*). All of the active and cognitive (though not the theological) elements of Benjamin's distinction are present and isolated, but the terminology remains unstable. Plessner writes here of *Körper* and *Leib* interchangeably, and often of the unity of the *Körperleib*, and he analyses the unity in a somewhat rigid and unconvincing combination of *Geistleib* as the giving of meaning and *Körperleib* as unity of comportment (*Haltung*).

But in his extraordinary *Stufen des Organischen* ('Levels of the Organic') published only in 1928, Plessner divides and opposes *Körper* and *Leib* just as clearly as Benjamin. Yet he does so in the way Benjamin resisted, offering a naturalistically radicalised version not only of Dilthey's hermeneutics,[247] but of Klages's cosmology. Plessner transposes Klages's categories of 'soul' and 'mind' onto the body, but in a more mechanical fashion than that of Benjamin. He does not challenge Klages's unreflexive and undialectical privileging of lived experience. To do so, of course, Benjamin required recourse to a realm he conceived as theological: this was the payoff for the rejection of the certainties of the phenomenological for the open field of the speculative.

Yet Plessner's distinction is no less bold for that. His question is, like Benjamin's, 'what makes for the unity of sense and reflection that is uniquely

human and which allows for knowledge?' He distinguishes between different forms of 'positionality' by which organisms stand in an active relation to their environment. Animal life is described as 'centric': the animal *is* its body; it cannot simply live as part of its environment but must actively engage with it in order to survive. It thus lives outwards from the body, in the here and how, never distinct from the body, never experiencing it as such, but living the body in the attempt to sustain life. Man too is his or her body (*Leib*), experiencing it directly and living it directly; but this is not only in this centric way. Man *is* his or her organic body (*Leib*), but also *has* an objectual body (*Körper*) of which it is conscious and over which it disposes for instrumental purposes, be they expression or action, purposes that can modify or contradict centric uses of the identical *Leib*-being. *Leibsein* and *Körperhaben*: being a body and having it too. Plessner calls this mankind's 'eccentric' positionality. The human being lives in a constant precarious balance between his or her two bodies, one that can never settle into anything like an equilibrium; it is the 'discontinuity'[248] that becomes human life and generates its forms. In Plessner's words, the human's sudden and constant shifting

> from his being within his organic body to his being outside of it is a twofold character of his existence that cannot be abolished; it is a true rupture of his nature. He lives on both sides of the break, as a soul and as an objectual, instrumental body, *and* as the psychophysically indifferent unity of these spheres. That unity does not, however, cover over the twofold character of his existence, does not permit it to arise out of itself; the unity is not the third term that reconciles the two opposed terms . . . It is the very rupture, the hiatus, the empty 'passage through' of the mediation, that is equivalent for the human being himself to the absolute double character and twofold aspect of the body, as organic body and physical body, and soul.[249]

This distinction, writes Jürgen Habermas, 'releases anthropology from the metaphysical bind: it is no longer the opposition of spirit and life, nor the Christian schema of soul and body, nor the Cartesian opposition of consciousness and body that are decisive for the concept of mankind.'[250] Every aspect of life 'demands an alert and competent mediation between being a body and having a body, between the outside and the inside. In the awkward position of having to be simultaneously a situation and an object, man is forced to make of himself what he already is'.[251] Out of this constant balancing act in the face of recurring but ever-changing needs, Plessner can derive an anthropology-as-hermeneutics of remarkable subtlety and depth. But the distinction and the anthropology that Plessner bases upon it are of a thoroughly anti-metaphysical kind (this represents a change from the *Einheit der Sinne*). From his base in phenomenology, he seeks to derive biological foundations for mankind's

uniqueness that can none the less account for the complexity and fullness of lived experience.

Thus the projects of Benjamin and Plessner diverge and quickly become incompatible. But they start with the same problematic, that of the problem of Kantianism and the challenge of psychophysics. Their focus on perception and the body also intersects in the region of non-conceptual knowledge. And finally, their distinctions between bodily modes of being also lead to a similar notion of 'eccentricity'. Though the coincidence can be explained by a common interest in the work of Klages, it is nonetheless remarkable. Here is Benjamin's version, written in a note from about the same time as the meditation on the psychophysical problem:

> We are put into the perceptual world by virtue of our bodiliness [*Leiblichkeit*], and in the end most immediately through our own body [*Leib*], and thus into one of the highest levels of language. But we are blind, as natural organic bodies largely unable . . . to distinguish appearance from true being according to the measure of Messianic form. It is quite significant that our own body [*Leib*] is inaccessible to us in so many ways: we cannot see our face, our back, our entire head (and thus the noblest part of our body), we cannot embrace ourselves, and much more. We enter into the perceptual world feet first, so to speak, and not with the head. Therefore the necessity that our *Leib* transform itself, transform us [*sich uns verwandle*] in the moment of pure perception; therefore the sublime anguish of the eccentric aspect of our own bodies [*des Exzentrischen an seinem Leibe*].[252]

Clearly, Benjamin's notion of eccentricity remains within the speculative realm, one that could still lead in a direct way to a new notion of experience and of the absolute, albeit 'feet first', while Plessner's leads to an anthropology and a sociology. The anthropological approach sees eccentricity as a simultaneity of positions that ruptures human existence *a priori*; this form of alienation is a given that constitutes humanity and not any sort of historical development. The speculative approach sees eccentricity as equally given, but not necessarily insurmountable. In an extraordinary image, Benjamin describes this eccentricity as a blind spot of conceptual knowledge at the same time as it suggests a Messianic plenitude of experience. But the image raises a difficult question. If the *Leib* is the functioning body of the profane world, and thus the world of politics, is this utterly incompatible with the higher level of knowledge and experience of the *Körper* and its connection with the historical process as a whole? Is action at a moment of history incompatible with a fuller form of knowledge, knowledge that is ultimately Messianic and the end of history? How can the *Leib* transform itself and us in the moment of pure perception?

With these questions, we return to the question of a physiognomy of art, a possibility opened up for the twentieth century so clumsily but urgently by Hans Sedlmayr. It is the question of a history of vision, vision that is bodily knowledge, but knowledge that is lost. And this last note that I have just cited, written by Benjamin when he was most engaged with the work of Riegl, represents one of the most important roots of Benjamin's answer to the question, one that achieved its fullest elaboration in the Artwork essay. After describing the agony of eccentricity, Benjamin continues:

> There is a history of perception, which is in the end the history of myth. The body [*Leib*] of the perceiver was not always merely the vertical coordinate in relation to the horizontal coordinate of the earth. The slowly achieved upright gait of mankind already implies earlier and utterly different forms of perception . . . The knowledge of a measured distance will not always have dominated visual perception (the case of the child, who, immobile, forms its own visual world without organs capable of grasping – different hierarchy of distance). The history of perception comes from elements of natural evolution and the changing of the body.[253]

Already before 1920, Benjamin was committed to a history of perception, and the history of perception Benjamin offers in his Artwork essay is, in fact, his physiognomy of art.

But before returning to the Artwork essay, it is worth saying one more thing about the odd and ultimately incompatible overlap between Benjamin's and Plessner's answers to the psychophysical problem. For if there is any reason to attend to the similarity of these two projects, it is that they ultimately converge in the realm of politics. Both inquiries into the bodily nature of knowledge are, in the end and indeed at their core, political. (Furthermore, both Plessner and Benjamin work out their notions of the bodily existence of mankind in a close confrontation with the same work, Carl Schmitt's powerful definition of the political emerging out of the necessity of distinguishing friend from foe.[254]) Plessner develops a politics based on his anthropology in *The Limits of Community* of 1924, roughly simultaneously with his work on mimic expression, chronologically between the intricate *Einheit der Sinne* and the grand *Stufen des Organischen*. He seeks to find political forms of social life based less on utopias of reason or community than on the human need for dignity, a need emerging from the irreconcilable double-sided nature of his existence as both organic and instrumental body. Plessner focuses on the forms of sociation that allow for a balance between the needs of the organic body and the social instrumentalisation of the objectual body deployed in society. He shows that this dictates a certain distance and a modicum of insincerity that can be found in tact

and diplomacy, a kind of artificiality unavoidable in the interaction of the 'ruptured' subjects he describes. This artificiality respects the sphere of privacy so that the inevitable play of power that is the public arena can function. Only the regular creation of forms of distance and dissimulation can reconcile the necessity of politics with the fundamental human demand for dignity, balancing what Plessner terms the need to avoid ridicule with the need for social integration. Plessner is clear that the adoption of forms of artifice, mask and disguise are the only way in which the individual can function socially without the constant, unmediated and ultimately inappropriate display of what he or she truly is. He does not oppose the inside of community with the alienation of society, but pleads for society as the only sphere of toleration and diplomacy that allows for the constant negotiations of power while leaving the human intact, unexposed and autonomous. Plessner's view has been described compellingly as a 'code of cool conduct'.[255]

Uwe Steiner has shown that Benjamin's notes on the psychophysical problem and the *Leib/Körper* distinction developed there are an essential part of his concept of the political.[256] Now Plessner's politics, of course, are liberal, privileging reserve and freedom over unity and coercion, and accepting a measure of alienation as the only human alternative to the more brutish forms of domination. Benjamin's politics was of a very different kind, based on his hopes for knowledge of forms of experience glimpsed but not yet understood, forms that exceeded the phenomenal grasp of a fallen humanity whose language and experience had degenerated to the zone between the empty infinity of Descartes and the conceptual prison of Kant. This realm of politics was not, like Plessner's, open to observation and analysis, but required instead a more speculative approach that could situate it within a metaphysical view of mankind.

Different as the politics are, their derivation leads to more similarities. Neither bases politics on pure dogma or abstract reason, and both ground politics in the living body as opposed to empty codes of morals or ethics. In fact, to get a handle on Benjamin's notion of the political in relation to his notion of the body, I would like to pursue the claim that, just as Plessner does, Benjamin sees politics (and a politics of the visual) as a form of mimic behaviour, part of that realm of *Verhalten* or bodily conduct and knowledge that both found so compelling. To get a sense of how this plays out in the Artwork essay, it is worth revisiting that figure who did not exist but who was nonetheless so important that he simply had to be invented: the expert.

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Politics as *Verhalten*: Revisiting the Expert

Earlier, I considered Benjamin's Artwork essay as a sociological psychology and phenomenology of labour. To do so, it was necessary to reduce the extraordinary historical scope, conceptual richness and intellectual daring down to the level of the facts of labour and the procedures of the laboratory. At one level the essay demanded that it be read literally in that way, inviting its readers, after all, to test. More to the point, the compelling intersections with debates in the literature, visual arts, psychology and social theory of the time make it abundantly clear that the essay was meant as an intervention in those areas as well, and must be open to judgement on their terms. In other words, by focusing on the least elaborated concepts – the figure of the expert and the notion of distraction – I tried to separate the very real and tangible matters that Benjamin discusses from his more speculative use of them. Looked at in this way, the Artwork essay has some obvious flaws, and I hope to have cast some light on their origins.

But now we have a very different but equally rich weave of coordinates and concepts by which to consider distraction and the expert: we can consider them as part of a materialist physiognomy of the image, a project that was not Benjamin's alone and which overlapped with advanced work in psychology, linguistics and the human sciences at the time. And if we consider them as part of a speculative history of perception, as implicated in experience of a kind that could not be accounted for by the natural sciences and the philosophy that mimicked them, they look very different. In any case, it becomes possible to see how Benjamin could have formed these ideas, how they might have seemed sensible.[257]

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To see the spirit from the flesh, to use the flesh as a mediator and a producer of knowledge, to know from and with the body: these are the possibilities raised by the problematic that went by the name of physiognomy, non-sensuous similarity, the visible man, visible character and others at the time. Benjamin revisited this problematic from his earliest notes to his last works. One of the most striking examples comes from *One-Way Street*, a book that otherwise bears so many marks of constructivism. Typically, the title of the section is architectural in flavour, but it directs the reader to a secret space buried in the city, deep in a building, invisible from any perspective or position but from within: 'Madame Ariane – Second Courtyard, Left.'[258] Madame Ariane is a soothsayer, a fortune-teller. If Benjamin insisted that philosophy must presuppose the possibility of soothsaying from coffee grounds, then Madame Ariane has already mastered this task – how, we do not know. Benjamin's interest in the text is

not here occult procedure per se, but rather the reaction of the man or woman faced with this knowledge of the future, knowledge grasped from outside the space and time of the two people, client and diviner, hidden behind the façade and far from the street.

What he or she learns, however, is the utter uselessness of occult insight, regardless of how accurate it might be: 'He who asks fortune tellers the future unwittingly forfeits an inner intimation of coming events that is a thousand times more exact than anything they may say.'[259] The client is given the future packaged for the mind, but the body always knows first, has always already known: 'Omens, presentiments, signals pass day and night through our organism like wave impulses.'[260] The human organism knows the future sensuously. This knowledge of a different point of time is much like the mimetic knowledge that can perceive the trace from another plane of experience, that can understand the synaesthetic language of nature that we no longer speak:

> [W]hen you are taken unawares by an outbreak of fire or the news of a death, there is in the first mute shock a feeling of guilt, the indistinct reproach: Were you really unaware of this? Didn't the dead person's name, the last time you uttered it, already sound different in your mouth? Don't you see in the flames a sign from yesterday evening, in a language you only now understand?[261]

As in the mimetic faculty, the organ of this knowledge is the body: 'It is not with impunity,' writes Benjamin,

> . . . that unlived life is handed over to cards, spirits, stars, to be in an instant squandered, misused, and returned to us disfigured; we do not go unpunished for cheating the body [*Leib*] of its power to meet the fates on its own ground and triumph. The moment is the Caudine Yoke beneath which fate must bow to the body. To turn the threatening future into a fulfilled 'now', the only desirable telepathic miracle, is the work of bodily presence of mind [*leibhafter Geistesgegenwart*]. Primitive epochs, when such demeanor was part of man's daily husbandry, provided him with the most reliable instrument of divination in the naked body [*im nackten Leibe*]. Even the ancients knew of this true practice, and Scipio, stumbling as he set foot on Carthaginian soil, cried out, spreading his arms wide as he fell, the watchword of victory, 'Teneo te, terra Africana!' What would have become a portent of disaster he binds bodily to the very moments [*bindet er leibhaft an die Sekunde*] and makes himself into the complete servant of his body [*zum Faktotum seines Leibes*].[262]

Benjamin invokes the knowledge of the body not to explain it, but rather to make a specific point. That point is the incompatibility of reflection and intervention, the fact that knowledge always comes too late for action. 'Nothing is more unlike the submissive apathy' with which the client 'hears his fate revealed

than the dangerous, alert dexterity with which the man of courage lays hands on the future.'[263] About the omens that are ever passing through the body, Benjamin writes:

> To interpret them or to use them: that is the question. The two are irreconcilable. Cowardice and apathy counsel the former, lucidity and freedom the latter. For before such prophecy or warning has been mediated by word or image, it has lost its power, the power to strike at our centre and force us, we scarcely know how, to act accordingly. If we neglect to do so, and only then, the message is deciphered. We read it. But now it is too late.[264]

The knowledge of the body falls under the rubric of the occult; it has access to planes of experience beyond the one mapped by the natural sciences and accepted for the mind by Kant; it cannot be pinned down into a concept or image.

Heiner Weidmann has explored the mutual exclusivity of interpretation and action elaborated in 'Madame Ariane' on the example of gambling, a topic that plays a central role in the Arcades Project (and an occasional role in the life of Benjamin himself), and he has related this to the form of action Benjamin calls, in the Artwork essay, 'distraction'.[265] It is worth here summarising his important findings in order to build upon them and to show that this aspect of Benjamin's work is rooted in his quite literally physiognomic approach, and that Benjamin's physiognomy of art has many points of contact with work outside of his own.

Exploring the phenomenon of gambling in his Arcades Project, Benjamin relates the new bourgeois popularity of gambling to the mechanical labour of the proletarian. In both cases, the experiences do not accumulate and become the knowledge of true experience or *Erfahrung*, instead remaining mere *Erlebnis*, experience of an intransitive sort, experience that cannot be built upon as each repetitive action is a new start unaffected by those that preceded it. For Benjamin, however, it is not so much the factory worker as the successful gambler who has mastered the art of thinking with his body, of *using* the signals that pass through the organism rather than interpreting them. We could add that he is the figure who has explored the states of the *Körper* that go beyond the *Leib*'s tidy and instrumental gestalt perception, states Benjamin evoked in the important fragment on 'Perception and Body [*Leib*]'. The speed of the game induces

> the authentic 'intoxication' of the gambler. Such intoxication depends on the peculiar capacity of the game to provoke presence of mind through the fact that, in rapid succession, it brings to the fore constellations which work – each one wholly independent of the others – to summon up in every instance a thoroughly new, original reaction from the gambler. This fact is mirrored

> in the tendency of gamblers to place their bets, whenever possible, at the very last moment – the moment, moreover, when only enough room remains for a purely reflexive move. Such reflexive behavior on the part of the gambler rules out an 'interpretation' of chance. The gambler's reaction to chance is more like that of the knee to the hammer in the patellar reflex.[266]

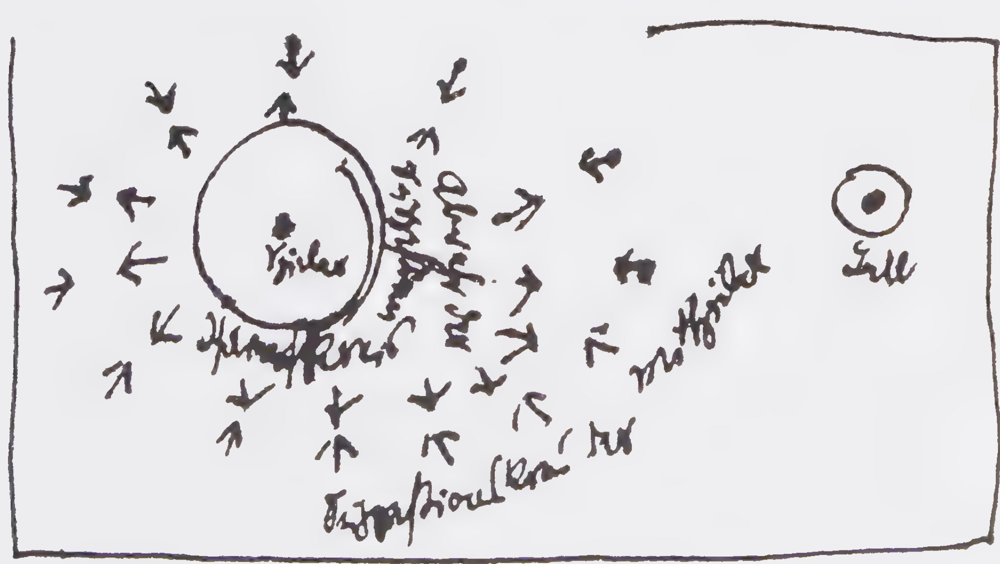
In other words, the gambler does not allow his perceptions of the game to enter consciousness: 'Only the future that has not entered as such into his consciousness is parried by the gambler.'[267] The modernity of widespread bourgeois gambling is the same as the modernity of factory labour and metropolitan experience: the constant presence of shocks that can only be parried and not absorbed. 'The bet is a means of conferring shock value on events, of loosening them from the context of experience.'[268]

But this form of behaviour is not reflex: it is knowledge. In notes of 1929 to 1930, Benjamin writes of this process of gambling intoxication, of bodily presence of mind, as the ability 'to discover knowledge in movement [*Wissen . . . motorisch zu entdecken*].'[269] This is knowledge produced by the body, knowledge discovered in action and not translated into concepts, numbers or images. '*Geistesgegenwart*' or 'presence of mind' happens only when the body takes over; or, as Weidmann concludes in a fine paradox, 'presence of mind is absence of mind'.[270] Presence of mind is thinking with the body, turning the self into its complete servant.

There are a few points to be noted here about the seemingly paradoxical notion of presence of mind as complete absence of mind, of the body taking over the task of thinking. The first involves the complete surrender of subjectivity that this implies. This puts us back in the area that was mapped for the study of 'expression' so influentially by Ludwig Klages. In his *Vom kosmogonischen Eros*, which was so important to Benjamin's late notion of the aura and for his consideration of the psychophysical problem, Klages discusses the nature of ecstasy – one of the states in which, as Benjamin rewrote it, the body transcends its limits, moving from earth-bound *Leib* to transhistorical *Körper*, with all its potential for knowledge of a world-historical sort. Recall Klages's terms: *Geist* is the instrumental mind of man, its ego-component, its rational organ; this is the part of mind that is reduced, that reifies, that cuts mankind off from the cosmos. *Seele*, on the other hand, is that part of mind that encompasses the totality of lived experience, that is part of the cosmos as opposed to separated from it. Ecstasy is freedom, writes Klages, but freedom of what, and freedom from what?

> It is *not*, as one would imagine, the *Mind* of man that is liberated, but rather the *Soul*; and the soul is liberated *not*, as one would imagine, from the body [*Leibe*], but precisely from the *Mind*![271]

Georg Gidal, *Street Roulette*, c.1930. Photograph courtesy SVTBild/Das Fotoarchiv, Essen.



Walter Benjamin, diagram of the position and telepathic communication of a successful gambler in roulette, from the fragment titled 'Telepathy,' 1927 or after. From Benjamin, *Gesammelte Schriften*, VI, p. 188.

In other words, the state of ecstasy, of connection with the greater world, involves the surrender of the sense of self, its total relinquishment. But the body remains, and remains important, as the very organ of the soul. There are similarities here with Benjamin's notion of the gambler's intoxication, of knowledge to be grasped only from beyond the prison of rational and conceptual thought.

It has long been established that *Vom kosmogonischen Eros* was crucial to the formulation of Benjamin's notion of aura, 'that strange weave of space and time: unique appearance of distance, so near [something] may be';[272] indeed, the reader of Klages's esoteric little volume who is familiar with Benjamin's work is struck again and again by a sense of *déjà vu*. Aura is revealed in the kind of contemplation by which the work of art could yield its secrets before industrial capitalism had subjected images to other forms of use and reception. When he first read this book, Benjamin was also considering Klages's slightly earlier *Vom Wesen des Bewußtseins* (1921). Here we read a fine description of contemplation:

> Let us assume that someone observes a shimmering stone . . . and is 'captivated' by the sight of it. At first, he has a feeling of himself and of the image of the stone. And now something happens, something bestowed in its full strength on only a very few of us . . . although of course everyone knows the initial signs: namely that the observer 'sinks into' the thing he observes. Then, consciousness is turned into a mirror in which only the gleam of this stone glows, and before the extraordinary power of the image, the sense of self is extinguished.[273]

In contemplation, consciousness 'submerges' (*versinkt*). This is the same word Benjamin uses in the Artwork essay (*Versenkung*). In the state he calls 'presence of mind', we witness the very same process, but turned from the surrender of subjectivity for the purposes of contemplation into the very same surrender to the end of *action*. We saw how, in his outlines of the psychophysical problem, Benjamin tried to recast the differing forms of human consciousness into modes of physicality; here he has turned the state of ecstatic knowledge from a passive to an active mode of bodily being. This, precisely, is what allows one to circumnavigate the blind spot of the *Leib*'s blind entry into the world; this is how the *Leib* can 'transform itself, transform us' in the moment of 'pure perception'; this is how the politically active *Leib*, which knows only in the plane of experience that can be identified with Kant, can be combined with the theologically oriented, historically knowing *Körper* of Benjamin's early distinction.

Knowledge can expand beyond the plane of experience of neo-Kantianism: there is nothing wrong with the mind as an organ of knowledge. The problem is that a body whose mimetic faculty has atrophied imposes the categories and

forms of a now very limited form of experience and perception onto the mind, and that mind now thinks in concepts, in the limited 'language of man'. Thus the problem is the ability of the body to experience and to perceive. The Artwork essay represents the end of a long line of thinking in Benjamin's work about the body's ability to know in a way different from the contemplative form Benjamin associates with the split of subject and object, with Kantianism and neo-Kantianism, and with historicism. At the same time, it is a radicalisation of Klages's thesis, from *Der Geist als Widersacher der Seele*, that 'no experience is conscious and no consciousness can experience'.[274]

This leads to the second point: that knowledge, for Benjamin, is *Verhalten*, a mode of physical behaviour. Knowledge of the kind that matters is physical, knowledge that does not come 'too late' is already action. For the gambler, knowledge of the future lies not in concepts, images or information, but rather in that zone of bodily reflex, the kind of bodily intersubjectivity that Plessner identified with 'behaviour'. That '*Schicht des Verhaltens*' is the one where consciousness and concepts do not interfere, but the body nonetheless produces knowledge instead of simply responding mechanically to the outside world. *Verhalten* is neither reflex nor reflection, neither voluntary nor involuntary. It is a kind of knowledge that others describe as the ability to interpret 'expression', or even the ability to think physiognomically.

Benjamin works this out relatively clearly in notes on the nature of historicism, a mode of knowledge he sees as contemplative, passive, as one that cannot grasp history as a living totality but only as the dead and done deeds of the past. He calls this view a mode of behaviour, a *Verhalten*, and considers this the practical aspect of knowledge. The notes are titled 'The Philosophy of History of the Late Romantics and the Historical School', and they bear the signs of his contemporary reading of Klages. The 'philosophical genius' of the Historical School, he writes,

> lies in the fact that its theoretical and practical stance [*Haltung*] were identical; it lies in the only mode of behaviour [*Verhalten*] that it acknowledged. This was observation. For the Romantics, unlike modern thinkers, observation was not just a theoretical form of behaviour [*Verhalten*]. If we may distinguish between an early and a late Romantic theory of observation, we should discover at the theory's centre, in the former case, reflection, and, in the latter case, love. What they had in common was a belief in the efficacy of observation. For the Late Romantics, observation was a sun beneath whose rays the object of love opens up to further growth. But if its rays were withheld, the object of love remained in the dark and wilted. In the spectrum of variations in these modes of behaviour [*Verhaltungsweisen*], not only scientific but also practical points of view are relevant.[275]

Here a theory of knowledge is equated with, or seen as inseparable from, a mode of behaviour.

This leads to the final point, which is that politics too is *Verhalten* – not only action, but a form of knowledge found in the body, found in the course of acting. And this also leads back to the expert, distracted and solving problems by habit. What, then, is distraction? As a real state of mind or a fact of labour between the wars, it simply did not exist. As a speculative mode of behaviour, a hypothetical kind of knowledge, however, it makes some sense.

The conditions under which physico-political passivity can be transformed into a speculatively conceived *Verhalten* or mode of behaviour, into active bodily knowledge, are what Benjamin describes in the Artwork essay. 'During long periods of history, human perception changes with humanity's entire mode of existence', he writes in the first version of the essay, a statement diluted in the better-known final version, where this straightforward statement no longer looks so literal.[276] The first version makes clear that Benjamin is presenting the 'history of perception' described in the note on 'Wahrnehmung und Leib' from about 1920, one that could give clues to how the body might 'transform itself, transform us' in a 'moment of pure perception', that could give the key to overcoming 'the sublime anguish of the eccentric aspect of our own bodies'. For photography provides the conditions in which the body would no longer be 'blind' to other planes of experience. He describes strikingly photography's destruction of the prison of Kantian experience, the passive acceptance of the natural sciences' limited sense of space and time. Film leads to a 'deepening of apperception' in 'the entire optical, and now also the acoustical, perceptual world'.[277]

> Our taverns and our metropolitan streets, our offices and furnished rooms, our railroad stations and our factories appeared to have us locked up hopelessly. Then came film and burst this prison-world asunder by the dynamite of the tenth of a second, so that now, in the midst of its far-flung ruins and debris, we calmly and adventurously go traveling. With the close-up, space expands; with slow motion, movement is extended. The enlargement of a snapshot does not simply render more precise what in any case was visible, though unclear: it reveals entirely new structural formations of the subject.[278]

In the first version, Benjamin went further than this, invoking precisely those states corresponding not to the normal, instrumental physicality of the *Leib*, but to the 'unlimited' states of the *Körper*, those that he invoked in the early note on 'Wahrnehmung und Leib' that needed so urgently to be explored. This is found in his early formulation of the notion of the 'optical unconscious', where he writes about the camera image's 'falling and climbing, its interruption and isolation, its expansion and compression . . . its enlargement and shrinking':

Umbo (Otto Umbehr), *Portrait of Ilse Fehling and Nicolai Wassilieff*, 1927. Photograph Bauhaus-Archiv Berlin.

> We first experience the optical unconscious from this, just as we learned of unconscious drives through psychoanalysis. And between these two there are other, close connections. For the manifold aspects that the recording apparatus can wring from reality lie to a large extent outside of a *normal* spectrum of sensory perception. Many of the deformations and stereotypes, the metamorphoses and the catastrophes that the world of visual perception can find in film, actually exist in psychoses, in hallucinations, in dreams.[279]

Film and photography turn the visual product into the series of shocks, which are discussed not as a timeless possibility of experience but as a historically circumscribed content of perception:

> Reception in distraction, which is making itself felt with increasing emphasis in all areas of art and is a symptom of deep transformations of perception, has its central place in the cinemas. And here, where the collective seeks its distraction, the tactile dominant that is reorganizing apperception, is hardly absent . . . Nothing reveals more clearly the tremendous tensions of our time than that this tactile dominant is asserting itself in the optical realm itself. And this happens in film by means of the shock effect of the sequence of pictures. And so, from this side too film appears as the most important object today of the doctrine of perception, which the Greeks called aesthetics.[280]

This seeming paradox of the non-optical image, the tactile image, deserves mention, for it is in fact an element of the contemporary physiognomic conception of written language. In the *Grundfragen der Sprachphysiognomik*, read by Benjamin in 1933 or 1934, Heinz Werner writes that

> In this world of physiognomic words – symptomatic for its naivete and primordial character – the *optical* appears as closely connected with the *sense of touch.* The eye, which has, in the sphere of reason, long since become the cool mirror of things, appears here in a very real way as a *grasping organ*, one that grabs words, feels them, penetrates into them.[281]

In any case, shocks, as demonstrated by the discussion of gambling, train reactions that bypass conscious thought and allow the body to work on its own. These are the distracted reactions of walking in a city street, a street whose dangers correspond, historically, to other, more political dangers, and which can be the very site where battles are played out. The shock-effect of film

> needs, like every shock, to be met with heightened presence of mind. *Film is the art form that corresponds to the distinct danger to one's life with which the man of today lives.* It corresponds to profound transformations of the apparatus of perception – transformations experienced on an individual scale by

> the man in the street in big-city traffic, on a world-historical scale by every opponent of the current social order.[282]

World-historical dangers: this is the theological sphere of history defined in the 'Theologico-Political Fragment' and related to the knowing *Körper* and not the limited *Leib*. These dangers do not, however, need to be artificially induced in the way that the gambler created the conditions for his active behaviour, his presence of mind in the extinguishing of consciousness, his deployment of bodily knowledge. This bodily knowledge brought forth by film, this 'active *Verhalten* of subjects',[283] is the work of experts acting by habit, not reflection, 'for the tasks which face the human apparatus of perception at the turning points of history cannot be solved by optical means, that is by contemplation, alone. They are mastered gradually by habit, under the guidance of tactile reception.'[284]

Thus, like Balázs, Benjamin describes the scenario of film recreating the conditions of lost modes of sense perceptions, of physiognomic knowledge. It was a common trope of the time, and one central to the Artwork essay. In Benjamin's view, film returns the image to its place in the language of nature, one accessed by the mimetic faculty. Like the gambler, like the urban dweller, the viewer of film puts himself in danger. It is this danger that calls forth the *Verhalten* of habit, of presence of mind, of the instant deployment of bodily knowledge. This would be deployed in the realm of both *Leib* and the *Körper*, in time that is both social and theological, historically situated but of world-historical importance.

The Artwork essay, Howard Caygill has shown, describes how film provides the modern subject with new experiences of space and time, experiences that could correspond to other, speculative planes beyond Kant's circumscription of intuition. What needs to be added here is that it provides ways of suppressing subjectivity so that the body can act on its own, proper form of knowledge that is simultaneously action. It is the action of the *Körper*, with its Messianic sphere of action, and not the blind *Leib* and its anguish of eccentricity with regard to knowledge. Film and photography could recreate the conditions of 'pure perception' in which the body 'transforms itself, transforms us'.

*

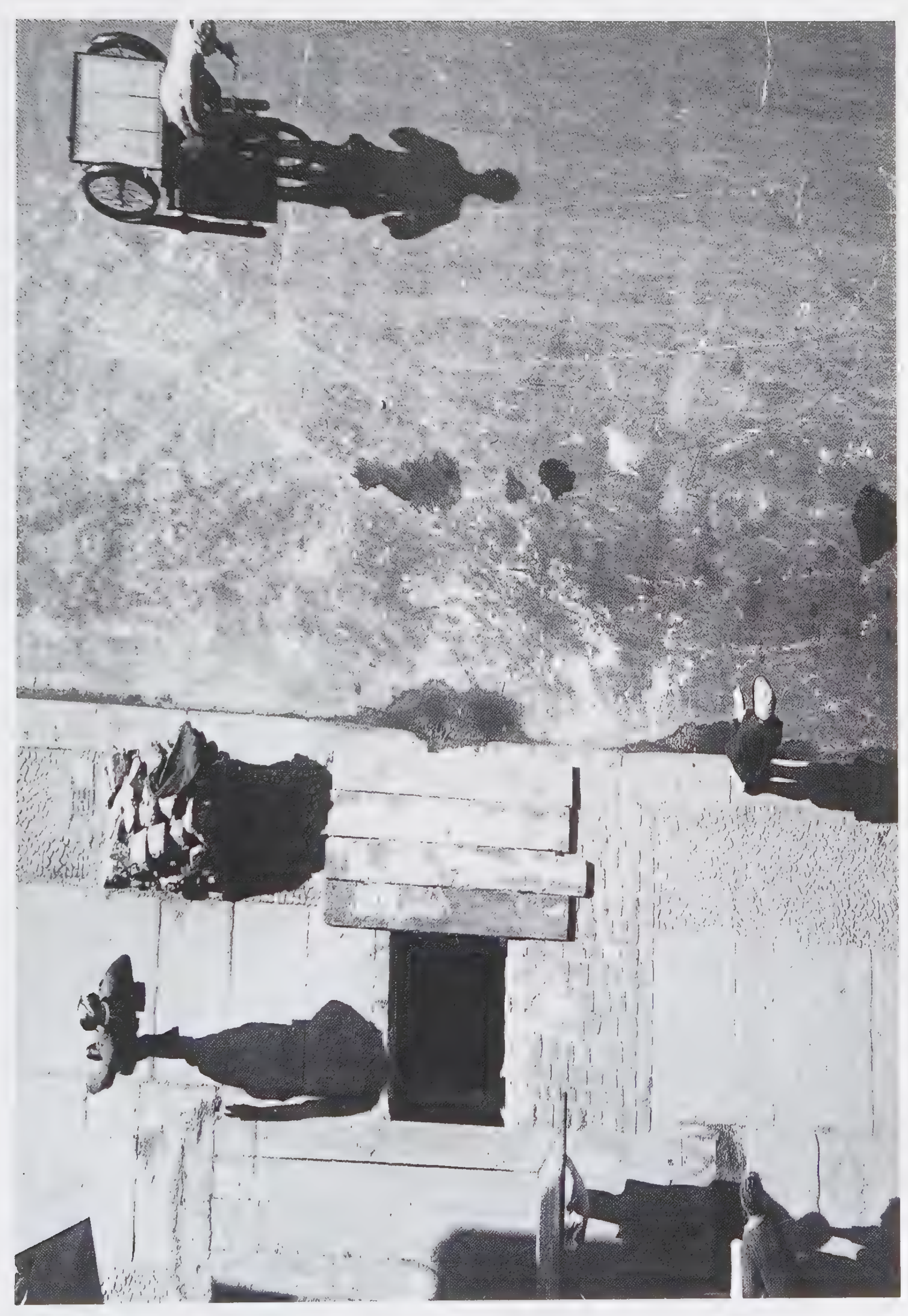
Danger and immediate, sure-footed response, knowledge that is simultaneously action: for Benjamin, that is also the territory of the historian of the non-historicist type, who can manipulate the perception of images into a dialectical one. Before leaving the expert, it is worth pointing out that an expert is something quite similar to what the historian must be. Take Benjamin's notion of historical materialism as materialist physiognomy literally once again: 'To

write history,' he notes in the Arcades Project, 'means giving dates their physiognomy.'[285] Paradoxically, Benjamin's historical materialism was physiognomic through and through. Both forms of knowledge strove for knowledge of the whole from the clues of the exterior, strove for knowledge that was spontaneous, instantaneous and unmediated. Like the expert, the historian must act at what Benjamin liked to call the 'moment of danger'.[286] His action must be tangible and tactile, the redemption of the past practised by the historian requiring the 'firm, seemingly brutal grasp.'[287] The historian must enact the *Verhalten*, the physiognomic knowledge that is the expert's, and like him – the inhabitant of the big city, or the driver of a train – the expert is always fending off disaster:

> The connection between presence of mind [*Geistesgegenwart*] and the method of historical materialism is still to be established. Not only that one will always be able to detect a dialectical process in presence of mind, as one of the highest forms of competent behaviour [*sachgemäßen Verhaltens*]. What is also decisive is that the dialectician cannot consider history as anything but a constellation of dangers which he is always . . . on the point of averting.[288]

This is the dialectical process of *Geistesgegenwart*, one that combines somatic with cerebral knowledge, physical with conceptual action. As Benjamin describes it, the method of historical materialism is the same: pure perception of history that is simultaneously action. The historian relinquishes the posture of contemplation and observation in order to act. Like the physiognomic knowledge Benjamin toyed with throughout his work, this happens like the automatic reaction of the city dweller, like the critic watching a film, like the expert negotiating the plan of a building without giving it a second thought. But it goes beyond this. The historian is, like that transformed *Leib/Körper*, now both inside and outside history. Like the inhabitant of a rainbow, one perceives history at the same time as one is part of it; one is its subject and object simultaneously. Following the language of physiognomy from the early notes, through the observations on gambling, into the Artwork essay and to the 'Theses on the Philosophy of History', it is clear that the same notions of physiognomic action or mimic behaviour informed Benjamin's epistemology and politics from the beginning.

With this in mind, a strand of thought concerning the visual and the human response to it looks, in context, quite familiar, indeed strangely sensible. The idea of the expert, critical and distracted, is explicable on its own terms and in terms of the outside bodies of knowledge with which Benjamin was engaged. The expert looks less like a simple error than a bold philosophical statement about the changing nature of experience and thought.



Umbo (Otto Umbehr), *Uncanny Street*, 1928. Photograph courtesy Kicken Berlin.

ABOVE Hand studies from Mary Wigman's School of Rhythmic Gymnastics, Hellerau bei Dresden. From Hans W. Fischer, *Körperschönheit und Körperkultur* (Berlin, 1928).

FACING PAGE 'Five Fingers has the hand. With five you grab the enemy! Vote list 5: Communist Party'. John Heartfield, colour lithograph poster, 1928. © The Heartfield Community of Heirs VG Bild-Kunst, Bonn and DACS, London 2005.

Mimicry, mimesis, the bodily knowledge of *Verhalten*: these are the aspects of the *Geisteswissenschaften* that came to be discussed as 'expression', that offered thinkers such as Plessner a way out of the philosophical trap of neo-Kantianism and Sedlmayr a trap-door to escape the crisis of historicism (though with the problematic he inherited strangely intact). These concepts offered a generation of thinkers a way of approaching the problem of the relation of body or image to mind on post-hermeneutical ground. That is where much of Benjamin's thought can be located, thought usually characterised so blandly as wavering between Marxism and mysticism. With an awareness of how certain kinds of knowledge were being reorganised in the first four decades of the twentieth century – of labour, of the body, of intuition and meaning – the contours of the concept of the distracted expert can be traced with some degree of precision. It emerges as an extraordinarily overdetermined concept.

Do we want, then, to revise our view of the constructivist expert in the light of the figure of the distracted gambler? No, I don't think so. It has long been

Heartfield
5 Finger hat die Hand
Mit 5 packst Du den Feind!
Wählt Liste 5
Kommunistische Partei!

known that Benjamin's notion of the aura has a relation to Klages and other mystical responses to the experience of capitalist modernity. What is clear now is that the ideas of distraction and the expert are every bit as dependent on this occult line of thought. It is now possible to recognise the proximity of the expressive and the active body, of the gesture pregnant with meaning and the accurate grasp or *Handgriff* of the polytechnically trained, politically active expert of Benjamin's own moment of danger. This Brechtian expert, so closely tied to the avant-garde and to what Benjamin called the 'constructive side of the revolution',[289] emerges from a matrix of thought that ranges promiscuously between the phenomenological, the political and the spiritualistic. It is not a term effectively opposed to the bourgeois 'aura', but part of the same complex of thought; it is not a product of the 'materialist' and political Benjamin – if there ever was one. As central as the politics of revolution were to Benjamin, its philosophical base was not. Even his political subjects do not make their history from the ground up; their things, the objects of their world, speak a language of truth and not the confused tongue that went by the name of 'fetishisation'. For Benjamin, just as for Sedlmayr, the things of the world look back at the viewer. These viewers and actors are figures inhabiting a landscape theologically constructed and pre-existing. A revolutionary politics can be made in that landscape, but whether it could be called 'Marxism' is a different question.

'In spite of its startling seductiveness,' wrote Adorno after reading a draft of the Artwork essay, 'I cannot find your theory of "distraction" at all convincing.'[290] It is now clear what was so startling about it, and what was so seductive. This response must have struck Benjamin as common sense of the most ideological and destructive sort. The conceptual tools of some now nearly invisible decades seemed, to Benjamin, to offer the possibility of a materialism that could do full justice to experiences still very rooted in his own bourgeois past, at a time when materialism as a political dogma was leading to a constellation of dangers he could not escape. But, despite a resurgence of interest in mimesis and the revival of a philosophical interest in the relation of organisms to their milieux, the field of thought has changed, and images look very different. So too do things. Once again, we place our bets with common sense.

⋆

Art as *Verhaltensweise*

Lifeless things, usually expressionless, acquire a face and gaze back at the viewer.

– Hans Sedlmayr, 'Bruegel's *Macchia*'[291]

To experience the aura of a phenomenon means to invest it with the capability of returning the gaze.

– Walter Benjamin, 'Some Motifs in Baudelaire'[292]

Ausdruck *is the gaze of artworks.*
– Theodor W. Adorno,
Aesthetic Theory[293]

The problematic of expression, of mimic behaviour, survived the war, of course. Many of the figures mentioned here continued to teach and publish. Similar strains of thought had a certain afterlife – in the work of Jürgen Habermas, for example, or Georges Canguilhem. But also, it seems, in the work of Adorno. Indeed, if Benjamin, like Plessner, took the challenge of Klages's response to the experience and the thought of modernity more seriously than almost anyone else at the time, it was perhaps Adorno who worked hardest at this after the death of his colleague. The way in which *Dialectic of Enlightenment* rehearses (but then diverges sharply from) Klages's critique of instrumental reason has been noted,[294] but here I want to draw attention to another way Adorno starts out from Klages's presuppositions and problematics. He does this by taking up the concept of *Ausdruck* and confronting it again and again with the concept of mimesis. These are concepts that occasionally intersect in Adorno's work, and when they do so, the constellation they define becomes opaque, and notoriously so. But as he shifts them, focusing on one valence of these or another, they occasionally let a shaft of light through as one aspect becomes transparent, however briefly.

The notion of mimesis appears first in Horkheimer and Adorno's *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, and there it presents relatively few interpretative difficulties. It appears as part of an early stage of this dialectic, the state before this primal state of knowledge as imitation of nature is necessarily but fatefully replaced by knowledge of a more conceptual and then instrumental sort. It is a state of myth in which a form of enlightenment inheres, a mythic state that must be overcome but which, when lost, separates enlightenment from its roots in nature and sets it on its path of catastrophic return to myth. On the evidence

of the authors' own citations and letters, the sources of this concept of mimesis can be traced to anthropological studies of primitive magic and religion, to Freud's notion of the 'death drive' in *Totem and Taboo*, to Marcel Mauss's (and, we should add, probably Max Scheler's) discussion of sympathy, and to Roger Caillois's extraordinary writings on animal mimicry emerging from his and Bataille's *Collège de Sociologie* (about which Benjamin kept Adorno and Horkheimer well informed).[295]

The clearest statement of the nature of mimesis here is quite Benjaminian, and it occurs in the discussion of two kinds of language whose original unity has been lost: on the one hand, language as leading to conceptual or discursive knowledge, as the manipulation of equivalents as signs; on the other, language as the knowledge of mimesis, as the ability to produce and perceive similarity:

> With the sharp separation of science and poetry, the division of labour it had already helped to effect took over language. The word was given to science as sign [*Zeichen*]; while as tone, as image [*Bild*], as true word it was divided among the various arts, though it could not, by addition, through synaesthesia or by a *Gesamtkunstwerk*, be restored. As sign, language is resigned to calculation in order to know nature, and must relinquish its claim to be similar to nature. As image, it is required to resign itself to copying in order to be all of nature, and must relinquish the claim to know nature.[296]

These terms, however, suggest an awareness of territory that was Benjamin's and that has not been recognised as representing a problematic Adorno engaged with, that of expression or *Ausdruck*. And yet contemporaries would no doubt have recognised the echoes from the linguistics, developmental psychology and characterology of the time. Compare Horkheimer and Adorno's formulation with those of Heinz Werner, whose work Adorno cites elsewhere. In his *Grundfragen der Sprachphysiognomik*, Werner rehearses one of the truisms of pre-war linguistics, that the relation of language to the words encompasses two separate issues, 'language as sign [*Zeichen*]' and 'language as image [*Bild*]', 'language as imitation of nature or not'.[297] This distinction corresponds to that of words as '*signs* of concepts' versus words as 'physiognomic *Ausdruck*'.[298] Now I would not like to make too much of this similarity; my point is simply that the constellation of meanings we can attach to Adorno and Horkheimer's early concept of mimesis was broader than that suggested by their own references, and that it incorporated bodies of knowledge we can now recognise.

And indeed, it is as a constellation that Adorno's concept of mimesis has hitherto been explored, and must continue to be. By attention to the various

ways the concept functions in Adorno's work – in particular in the posthumously published *Aesthetic Theory* – Josef Früchtl and Shierry Weber Nicholsen have cast their nets, perhaps, most widely.[299] Andreas Huyssen has recently, and very helpfully, isolated five different but overlapping meanings or registers of the term:

> [F]irst in relation to the critique of the commodity form and its powers of reification and deception, a thoroughly negative form of mimesis [*Mimesis ans Verhärtete*]; secondly in relation to the anthropological grounding of human nature which, as Adorno insists in *Mimina Moralia*, is 'indissolubly linked to imitation'; third in a biological somatic sense geared towards survival as Adorno had encountered it in Roger Caillois's work, some of which he reviewed for the *Zeitschrift für Sozialforschung*; fourth in the Freudian sense of identification and projection indebted to *Totem and Taboo*; and, lastly, in an aesthetic sense that resonates strongly with Benjamin's language theory, as it relates to the role of word and image in the evolution of signifying systems.[300]

Fredric Jameson is more synthetic than analytic. He too is bothered by 'the peculiar status of *mimesis* in Adorno – a foundation concept never defined nor argued but always alluded to by name, as though it had preexisted all the texts'.[301] His conclusion: 'in my opinion . . . mimesis is rather the substitute for the traditional subject-object relationship.'[302]

What I would like to do here is add one more register of meaning, one more facet, to that central constellation that goes by the name of mimesis in Adorno's work. I will do so by looking again at the work of Helmuth Plessner. Plessner has, of course, served several functions already in this discussion, having shown the way for a responsible appropriation of physiognomic thought as a way out of neo-Kantianism, and having provided a model for an understanding of Benjamin's thought about the bodily nature of thought and of politics. Finally, I would like to suggest that a fundamental aspect of Adorno's concept of mimesis in *Aesthetic Theory* can best be understood in the light of Plessner's work on mimic expression as *Verhalten*. For a close look at Adorno's text reveals the centrality of the problematic of a physiognomic notion of *Ausdruck*, the importance of which has been obscured by difficulties in translation. And furthermore, by the early 1950s, Adorno and Plessner knew each other well. When in 1952 Adorno needed to return to America for a year to maintain his citizenship, he and Horkheimer chose Plessner to stand in for him at the Frankfurt *Institut für Sozialforschung*. Their overlap there was brief, but Adorno was, at the time, coming to terms with the emergence of philosophical anthropology.[303] This is most evident in his occasional grappling with the work of

Arnold Gehlen; but that of Plessner, the other main figure of this line of thought, would not have been far from his mind.

'Art is a *Verhaltensweise*', writes Adorno, in various formulations, throughout the *Aesthetic Theory*. Art is a form of behaviour, a mode of comportment. That he means the '*Schicht des Verhaltens*' as described by Plessner in his 'Interpretation of Mimic Expression' is suggested by a pattern in Adorno's text that has not been noted: that the terms '*ästhetische Verhaltensweise*' and '*mimetische Verhaltensweise*' are used almost interchangeably in the text; and that discussions of *Verhaltensweisen* take place mostly in the context of discussions of *Ausdruck*. Art, mimesis, *Verhalten*, *Ausdruck*: this is a familiar problematic, not a private set of concerns confined to the work of Benjamin and Adorno.

'Since art is in its innermost essence a form of behaviour [*ein Verhalten*], it cannot be isolated from expression [*Ausdruck*], and there is no expression without the subject.'[304] Art is thus behaviour – a fact in the world – but also subjective. Recognisable here is the '*Schicht des Verhaltens*', the level of behaviour Plessner isolated as the area of human action that was at the same time thought, but not the thought of concepts and reason; it is where man is a part of nature in that he responds to other living beings as physical objects directly, bypassing thought; it is the realm of the physical that is at once interpretation and action; it is a form of bodily intersubjectivity that remains, nonetheless, objective as gestalt or stimulus. This is the sphere of life in which one responds to mimic expression by mimic behaviour, where expression and behaviour are one and the same. In Adorno's words, 'Art is a refuge of mimetic behaviour [*des mimetischen Verhaltens*]. In art the subject exposes itself, at various levels of its autonomy, to its other, separated from it and yet not altogether separated.'[305] In his discussion of mimicry, Roger Caillois was of course interested in the zone where organic and inorganic, living and dead, mixed; it was an important zoological locus of behaviour. But this was also the topic of Plessner's *Stufen des Organisichen*, one where the various 'levels of autonomy' and the 'relation to the other' were worked out in far greater detail. It was an analysis that provided an alternative to Heidegger's analysis of *Dasein*, and for that too it would have been of interest to Adorno. It is, of course, the subject/object split that the notion of mimesis can bridge over, but Adorno is concerned to discuss it first as Plessner does, at the level of the confrontation with the other, whether living or not: 'The memory trace of mimesis, which every artwork seeks, is always simultaneously the anticipation of a condition beyond the separation of individual from others.'[306] The kind of knowledge deduced from mimetic behaviour is objective and intersubjective at once. For Adorno it is the goal of art, and knowledge in general, but it is the kind of knowledge that does not survive the categories of rational thought:

> The survival of mimesis, the nonconceptual affinity of the subjectively produced with its other . . . defines art as a form of knowledge, and to that extent as 'rational.' For that which mimetic behaviour [*das mimetische Verhalten*] addresses is the telos of knowledge, which knowledge simultaneously blocks with its own categories. Art completes knowledge with what is excluded from knowledge, and thereby once again interferes with its character as knowledge, its unambiguous nature.[307]

The knowledge of concepts is thus radically inadequate.

The connections between Adorno's sense of mimesis and the matters discussed as *Ausdruck* before the Second World War have remained invisible to readers of Adorno in English because translations have blurred the distinction between *Ausdruck* and 'expression'. In English versions, these terms are equated, whereas Adorno distinguishes them along Plessnerian lines. *Ausdruck* is 'the non-subjective in the subject',[308] something objective, though not necessarily correct. As behaviour interpreted by behaviour, it constitutes an objective fact of the world, even when the 'meaning' imputed to it does not correspond to the psychic or subjective state of its carrier. *Ausdruck* is thus a tangible 'form of knowledge', while expression, for Adorno, is precisely the reflection of those subjective states that is *not* objective, and thus not the realm of art. *Ausdruck* 'seeks the transsubjective; it is the form of knowledge that, having preceded the polarity of subject and object, does not recognise this polarity as definitive'.[309] *Ausdruck* is not expression: 'Imitation is art only as the imitation of an objective *Ausdruck* remote from all psychology, *Ausdruck* which the sensorium was perhaps once conscious in the world and which now survives only in artworks.'[310] Expression remains bound in a subjective state; *Ausdruck* is a subjective state that is turned into objective form *without* being reified:

> Artworks' values of *Ausdruck* are no longer those of something unmediated and alive. Refracted and transformed, they become the *Ausdruck* of the thing itself . . . That quid pro quo not only neutralises mimesis; it also derives from it. If mimetic behaviour [*das mimetische Verhalten*] does not imitate something but rather makes itself like itself, that is precisely what artworks take it upon themselves to fulfill. In their *Ausdruck*, artworks do not imitate the impulses of individuals, nor in any way those of their authors; in cases where they define themselves essentially in this way, they yield as copies precisely to the reification that the mimetic impulses resists. At the same time history's judgement that mimesis is an archaic form of behaviour [*ein archaisches Verhalten*] is enforced on artistic *Ausdruck*: that mimesis, practiced in an unmediated way, is not knowledge.[311]

Expression is regressive, *Ausdruck* is the subjectively and somatically mediated content that is not the mere reproduction of subjective feelings. Expression is the archaic form of behaviour that descends into myth; *Ausdruck* a form of knowledge. For Adorno, contra Klages, art must be made into *Geist*, but not the *Geist* limited by the scientific side of the double character of language. Mimesis helps here; it is 'so to speak the preceding physiological form of *Geist*'.[312] And as physical, just like for Benjamin, the task is that of overcoming the blind spot of physical knowledge, perception in its limited form: 'This leads to a subjective paradox of art: to produce what is blind, *Ausdruck*, by way of reflection, that is, through form; not to rationalise the blind but to produce it aesthetically.'[313] Adorno calls this, in line with art-historical discussions, *Formgefühl* or the 'sense of form'. It must be neither in the subject nor in the object. It corresponds to physiognomic perception. Adorno calls this 'blind', for the subject cannot know its objective nature by expression alone, only by turning it into form, by perceiving it as another subject would:

> The sense of form is the reflection, at once blind and binding, of the work in itself on which that reflection must depend; it is an objectivity closed to itself that devolves upon the subjective mimetic capacity [*mimetischen Vermögen*], which for its part gains its force through its antithesis, rational construction. The blindness of the sense of form corresponds to the necessity in the object. The irrationality of the moment of *Ausdruck* is for art the aim of all aesthetic rationality. Its task is to divest itself, in opposition to all imposed order, both of hopeless natural necessity and chaotic contingency.[314]

Adorno follows here the logic of a physiognomic model, that of the interpretation of mimic expression and behaviour, to define the dialectic between mimesis and reflection. He calls this 'the aporia of mimesis and construction'.[315] This is the capacity of art to produce forms that allow for the non-regressive, dialectical breakdown of the distinction between subject and object, as a way of thinking about the other and the self simultaneously without perceiving that relation as one of reason or instinct's reflex to take the other as an object to be dominated.

Perhaps intentionally, Adorno also evokes methodologies like that of Sedlmayr. For the objective form of the work of art is not its artefactual materiality, but rather its reconstitution in the act of reception. The 'riddle' of the artwork yields

> as soon as the artwork is no longer perceived as fixed and then vainly interpreted, but instead brought forth again in its objective constitution . . . If some types of art, drama, and to a certain extent music, demand that they

> be played and interpreted so that they can become what they are . . . these do little more than reveal the mode of behaviour [*Verhaltensweise*] of any artwork . . . Artworks are self-likeness freed from the compulsion of identity. The Aristotelian dictum that only like can know like . . . divides the knowledge that is art from conceptual knowledge: what is essentially mimetic awaits mimetic behaviour [*das wesentlich Mimetische erwartet mimetisches Verhalten*].[316]

But for Adorno, the work of art is not the simple gestalt:

> Artworks are distinguished from the gestalts on which psychological theory is based in that in artworks the elements are not merely maintained in a sort of independence . . . Insofar as artworks appear, they are not – as physical gestalts are purported to be – immediately given. As intellectually mediated [*geistig vermittelte*], they enter into a contradictory relation with each other that appears in them at the same time that they strive to solve it.[317]

What is learnt by putting Adorno's notion of mimesis through the lens of a long line of physiognomic thought, the one I have sought to outline here as the content of the lost decades of thought before the Second World War? First, that Adorno's sense of the importance of a somatic aspect of knowledge, one central to art, comes from this suspect area of knowledge, one he and Horkheimer sought so steadily to steer Benjamin away from. The negative dialectic, or its complement in the notion of art as a mode of behaviour, has roots here. Of course, mimesis has another valence for Adorno; like reason, its other, it has a dialectic. The rejection of the concept is freedom from identity thinking and instrumental reason, but it is also a route back to myth. If mimesis is behind the 'shudder' of the new, the epiphany of utopia, it is also behind the descent into anti-Semitism and barbarism.[318]

Second, Adorno shows a dialectical path towards the incorporation of the body into knowledge. Adorno did not fall into the traps of phenomenology, either in its idealist or existentialist forms. Instead, he put the knowing body of the twentieth century, one newly aware of its cognitive potential, through the lens of a negative dialectic in a way that Benjamin, who sought a materialist physiognomy, did not.

Adorno, in other words, took up the challenge posed by a form of knowledge disreputable and debased, knowledge open to abuse and regularly subjected to it. It is doubtful that he would have done so were it not for Benjamin's wilful and eccentric attempt to develop a physiognomy of art, one that looked, at times, much like Sedlmayr's. The result is a mysterious book circling around an undefined concept whose roots lie in the invisible decades when thought

returned to the body in a critical way, a line of thought that could not be continued after the bodies of millions were subject to the most brutal kinds of science. *Aesthetic Theory* is perhaps the last genuine and constructive product of those invisible years.

AFTERWORD

At the still point of the turning world. Neither flesh nor fleshless;
Neither from nor towards; at the still point, there the dance is,
But neither arrest nor movement. And do not call it fixity,
Where past and future are gathered. Neither movement
from nor towards,
Neither ascent nor decline. Except for the point, the still point,
There would be no dance, and there is only the dance.

– T. S. Eliot, 'Burnt Norton'[1]

Time rots and gives birth at the same time.

– Ernst Bloch, *Erbschaft dieser Zeit*[2]

Seeing and Time

Some final words on another major German thinker of modernity and the work of art, of distraction, the new and history: Martin Heidegger. And only a few, for the fact is that his work hardly intersected with that of the critical theorists and art historians whose works have been explored here.[3] Benjamin's response to Heidegger was famously elliptical, Adorno's and Bloch's hostile, Kracauer's minimal. Of course, art historians did respond to the analytic of *Dasein*: one thinks immediately of Meyer Schapiro, but also of Kurt Bauch and even Heinrich Lützeler.[4] But Pinder and Panofsky do not seem to have registered the challenge of *Being and Time*, or the works before and after it. And there are good reasons for this. Heidegger's interest in tradition and historicality might well illuminate the creation of images and give coordinates by which to understand artistic work, but the reduction of history to historicity gives little foothold for a *history of art*. 'Philosophy,' wrote Heidegger in 1924, 'will never discover what history is as long as it analyses it as an object . . . The enigma of history lies in what it means to *be* historical.'[5] But this does not in any way solve the enigma represented by the imbrication of image, experience and modernity. The figures that have been discussed here were all convinced that art and history could not be separated, and that history in itself was worthy of

study. They were as committed to the historical study of images as they were aware of the traps of the lazy sort of historicism that was so notoriously bankrupt; they did not want to reduce the history of art to the history of art works any more than they wanted to reduce the role of tradition to an element of *Dasein*, authentic or not. Their ambitious and philosophically informed contributions to the historical study of art is what makes these figures compelling to many art historians today.

There is a fascinating exception that may help prove the rule, an essay by Hans Sedlmayr from 1955 titled 'The True and the False Present'.[6] This is, perhaps, Sedlmayr's most sustained statement on the nature of historical time and the temporality of the work of art; it is also the occasion for a response to Heidegger. Sedlmayr distinguishes between three modes of temporality, three kinds of time: 'vulgar', 'historical', and 'true' time. 'Historical' time is the easiest to grasp: it is Heideggerian time. Here the present moment (*Augenblick*) is one in which all of the past is incorporated into the point of 'decision' that will lead towards the future. He contrasts this with 'vulgar' time, a time in which the future does not exist, figuring only as the present turning into the past. For 'vulgar' time, the 'moment' exists not as tension of decision, but only as 'boredom' (*Langeweile*); it is the time that registers only the accumulation of a dead past. The problem with 'historical' time for Sedlmayr is its 'punctuality'. In 'historical' time the present is one of a constantly disappearing border between past and future, the present exists only as a border, a limit (*Grenzfall*). With time reduced to an instant, it has, he writes, no 'true present'.[7] This 'true present' is one that transforms the moment (*Augenblick*) into duration (*Dauer*); it is one that incorporates past and present without opposition; it is integrated or reconciled time. 'True' time might pass, but it is suspended; it represents an eternal present, a 'complete world in miniature that is liberated from the "actuality" of historical time'.[8] Thus both the 'historical' and the 'true' present maintain connections to both the past and the future, but those presents have a very different structure. Not surprisingly, Sedlmayr compares the fulfilled present, suspending the passage of time and incorporating both past and present, with the experience of the work of art – prototypically the musical work of art, but other forms as well. Experienced time, for Sedlmayr, is a 'mixed time' or a 'pseudotime' (*Scheinzeit*) with elements of all three types described. 'And only insofar as it partakes of true time can a bit of eternity enter into its brittle passage [*Hinfälligkeit*] . . . , a bit of eternity, a spell of true time enters in or, as it were, glimmers through.'[9] To grasp such moments, or to create artefacts that induce this, the artist must 'sacrifice his ego'.[10]

A few things should be said about Sedlmayr's analysis of time. First, Sedlmayr situates his discussion in the context of the analysis of *Dasein*: 'it will

suffice,' he writes when describing 'historical' time, 'to mention the name Heidegger.'[11] And he describes all of the temporalities using categories we recognise from Heidegger's 'jargon of authenticity' (Adorno): 'true' time is a present without 'guilt' or 'care'; 'vulgar' time is characterised by 'curiosity' (*Neu-gier*). Second, as much as Sedlmayr uses the terms of *Existenzphilosophie*, he does so in order to argue *against* the adequacy of Heidegger's analysis. One of the 'cardinal errors' of the current experience of time, he writes, 'is to take the pseudotime (*Scheinzeit*), with its character of burden, care and "throwness" as the *prototype of temporality as such*'.[12] Of the ways of experiencing time, the one 'described so profoundly by Heidegger is only *one*' mode, and indeed a 'deficient' one.[13] Finally, it is worth pointing out where Sedlmayr's notion of time comes from. His typology and analysis are based on the scattered writings on time by Franz von Baader, a mystic theologian in the tradition of Jakob Böhme and close to the Romantics. Sedlmayr was, in his later years, intensely interested in Baader's work. Despite the distance of a good century between them, Baader's deep Catholic faith and social conservatism was of a piece with Sedlmayr's, as were his criticisms of a society wracked by industrial and commercial modernity (which Baader experienced first-hand in England). In fact, the work of the theologian provided the notion of the social and spiritual 'middle', the loss of which was the thesis of Sedlmayr's post-war anti-modernist bestseller, *Verlust der Mitte* of 1948.[14] In his essay of 1955, Sedlmayr quotes Baader's 'On the Concept of Time' in order to describe the 'true present' of the artwork and of mystically fulfilled time:

> Eternity has hitherto been mistakenly conceived as an *immobile and petrified* present; it has not been realised that this time, in which two other times – the past and the future – must be contained (integrated), can only effect its fulfilled existence or duration in these three dimensions. Thus, anything in eternity – that is, everything that is taken into the fulfilled (complete and completed) life (for this is the true meaning of the words 'eternal life') – must be understood as *ever being, as ever having been and as ever to be* and thus ever reposing in its movement and ever moving in its repose.[15]

Sedlmayr also quotes Baader on 'false time', which is distinguished from 'pseudotime' (Baader) and 'historical time' (Sedlmayr):

> And yet the apparent present is in no way to be directly opposed to the true present but rather the *absolute negation of the present*; and thus the opposition between true time and apparent time is only apparent, at least not direct. For there is a direct opposition only between the first time and the third time that one must call false time. *In false time all being is in the past.*[16]

Sedlmayr lets Baader sum up the typology: 'If true time has three (integrated) dimensions, and apparent time only two of them, then false time can have only one.'[17]

We should make no mistake: for all its fascination, this is a particularly ugly piece of writing – far more objectionable, I think, than the tortured essay on Bruegel with its nearly compulsive focus on the limits of humanity. The idea that a prominent figure who made common cause with fascism can stand among its ruins and proclaim that the present was simply a 'false' present, and that the dead past was a false time, is hard to take, as is the echo of an eternal, 'true' present encompassing past and future with the rhetoric of the thousand-year Reich. It is the sheer disingenuousness of these ideas presented by a former Nazi in the wake of the concentration camps that takes one's breath away. As in the rest of Sedlmayr's post-war work, we find ideas that were completely compatible with national socialist ideology simply rehearsed with the new alibi of Catholic conservatism; it is a fine exercise in the gentle art of academic rebranding.[18] The most notorious example is his anti-modern, even neo-Spenglerian *Verlust der Mitte*, published in 1948 but drafted, to a large extent, during the national socialist years.[19] Here Sedlmayr repeats the kinds of analysis he presented in the Bruegel essay, but with a difference. His book is still based on the uncomfortably modernist conviction that the aesthetically radical work of Ledoux and Boulée through to the constructivists and surrealists represents the 'critical forms', the true face of modernity, but his reactionary values win out over his intellectual probing. Now he interprets the history of art and the history of society since the French Revolution as a 'monstrous inner catastrophe' using the full register of Nazi cultural vocabulary and basing his work on the same authorities.[20] By 1948, he was not writing of this as a catastrophe that could be addressed by national socialism and a proper relation to the destiny of a *Volk* (as he did in the late 1930s and early '40s); now the answer is a Catholic faith and a proper relation to God. (Nonetheless, the perverse and insightful modernism of the text was clear: Adorno publicly agreed with Sedlmayr's modernist analysis that foregrounded dissonance and fragmentation, while disagreeing, of course, with his conclusions.[21]) Sedlmayr weathered the controversy provoked by his post-war work stoically, but the seamless continuity of his thought and the verbatim repetition of the Nazi rhetoric of degeneracy certainly makes Heidegger's stubborn silence in the face of his own implication with fascism seem positively dignified, and compares with Carl Schmitt's aggressively unrepentant late years.

But what remains interesting here is how Sedlmayr's late essay on time reveals yet again a nearly uncanny proximity to the concerns of Walter Benjamin. Biographically, nothing connected them after the 1933 review of *Kunstwissenschaftliche Forschungen*, and nothing, of course, could connect them after

1940. Sedlmayr lived out the war, weathered his dismissal from academic service in the wake of his early and enthusiastic membership in the Austrian Nazi party, and was rehabilitated with the call to the most prestigious art-historical position in Germany, at the Ludwig-Maximillian-University in Munich. Benjamin had to flee from France in the wake of the German invasion and took his own life rather than face arrest, internment and deportation; he did not have the luxury of reconsidering the ruinous course of history from the comfort of a professorial chair. But Benjamin and Sedlmayr shared the esoteric interest in Franz von Baader; if anything, the work of the mystic theologian was more integral to Benjamin's thought than Sedlmayr's. Baader, who had much to say on the topic of angels, at times seems to have been Benjamin's own guardian.[22] Baader certainly informed Benjamin's complexly idiosyncratic and mystical notion of Messianic time, and this can be illuminated by comparison with Sedlmayr's use of Baader. At the same time, Benjamin's sense of time suggests a very different way of situating both image and action in history.

This can be seen by considering Hans-Georg Gadamer's response to Sedlmayr's critique of Heidegger (an unequal intellectual match if ever there was one). Sedlmayr, we read in *Truth and Method*, simply missed the point:

> Even if one speaks of . . . a historical and a supra-historical [kind of temporality], as does Sedlmayr, one cannot move beyond a dialectical tension between the two . . . Here the misunderstanding of Heidegger's ontological exposition of the time horizon avenges itself. Instead of holding on to the methodological significance of the existential analytic of *Dasein*, people treat this existential, historical temporality of *Dasein*, determined by care and the movement towards death, i.e. radical finiteness, as one among many possible ways of understanding existence, and it is forgotten that it is the mode of being of understanding itself which is here revealed as temporality. The withdrawal of the proper temporality of the work of art as 'sacred time' from transient historical time remains, in fact, a mere mirroring of the human and finite experience of art. Only a biblical theology of time, starting not from the standpoint of human self-understanding, but from divine revelation, would be able to speak of a 'sacred time' and theologically justify the analogy between the timelessness of the work of art and this 'sacred time.' Without this kind of theological justification, to speak of 'sacred time' obscures the real problem, which does not lie in the atemporality of the work of art but in its temporality.[23]

Starting from a ternary notion of time in the Baader vein, Benjamin works towards precisely this theological justification of the temporality of the work of art that Sedlmayr could not provide.

To begin with, Benjamin and Sedlmayr agree on the nature of the 'falseness' of a time that sees the past as a mere accumulation of dead material. This is Sedlmayr's 'false' time, Baader's 'subtime' (*Unterzeit*), and Benjamin's 'historicism'. 'In false time,' wrote Baader, 'all being is in the past'; and he wrote, in a section that Benjamin brought to Gershom Scholem's attention soon after acquiring his set of Baader's writings, of the 'desperation of "subtime", which lacks future and present and in which all truth lies in the past, where, as Milton says, hope never comes that comes to all.'[24] This is the very 'historicism' to which Benjamin opposed his own historical materialism. Historicism, writes Benjamin in his 'Theses on the Philosophy of History', 'is additive; it musters a mass of data to fill the homogeneous, empty time' of the past[25]; it is a 'narcotic'[26] that he relates to 'indolence of the heart, *acedia*, which despairs of grasping and holding the genuine historical image'.[27] Historicism 'gives the "eternal" image of the past', while the historical materialist must leave behind the 'whore called "once upon a time" in historicism's bordello'.[28] Sedlmayr's characterisation of the bad time of historicism (his 'first science of art') is nearly as passionate as Benjamin's; he calls it the 'museal spirit':

> It can only capture the present of artworks as the deceptive present of their embalmed corpses. What is oppressive about museal spirit is that it creates cemeteries for art without any guarantee of their resurrection. It corresponds to a kind of art history which sees its task exhausted in the determination of 'when? where? and by whom?,' in other words in the determination of the indices of bad temporality. J. G. Hamann's words are applicable to it: 'The field of history was like that wide field full of bones; and see: they were very dry.'[29]

Sedlmayr and Benjamin also shared a speculative or non-Kantian sense of alternative kinds of temporality. Sedlmayr writes that 'we have accustomed ourselves to dealing with non-Euclidean geometries. We shall have to accustom ourselves to dealing with various kinds of "existential" temporalities' that exceed not only the one described by Heidegger but also Baader. Benjamin, of course, was attuned to the possibility of forms of experience that could not be accounted for within the plane delineated and occupied by the natural sciences. Biographically, he sought these in his experiments with gambling and hashish; but most influentially he found an alternative form of space and time in film, in the way it could explode the prison-world of modern life by the dynamite of the fraction of a second, so one can examine the debris at leisure; it is a 'different nature' that the camera discovers.[30] But Sedlmayr could only fathom the notion of a time suspended on the model of the musical work of art; and his response to technical modes of vision is thoroughly in line with the apocalyptic and reactionary anti-modernism of his post-war years:

> The modern world has created an art form that seems to be the very paradigm of the structure of apparent time, precisely as the musical work of art served us . . . as the paradigm for a mode of being in true time. That form is film.
>
> On its own terms, film has in general no relation to true time. The time in which the film unfolds is only apparently different from vulgar time. Even when its time is made from fragments of vulgar (or even historical) time and thus is opposed to everyday temporality, it can only exceptionally raise itself into the true time of the work of art. At its best, it tends only to evoke the chaotically fragmented temporality of dreams.[31]

Benjamin found clues or traces of a new kind of present in film, while Sedlmayr retreated to a sanctioned art of the bourgeoisie. When they look to film, Benjamin's and Sedlmayr's conclusions are opposed, as are their intentions. Their analyses, however, are quite similar.

Benjamin's sense of the past is the same as Sedlmayr's and Baader's. His sense of the true present encompassing all of time, however, has a far grander historical sweep than that of his contemporary. Consider two of Benjamin's major writings on the philosophy of history in which he writes of mystical or Messianic time: his 'Theologico-Political Fragment' of uncertain date[32] and the late 'Theses on the Philosophy of History'. In the 'Theologico-Political Fragment', the profane realm – for Benjamin the realm of the *Leib* – is the political realm, its history leading towards an equally mundane future but its *end* being the Messiah's consummation of history. The two times, a profane present and a divine fulfillment, are of a different order. In the state of mystic fulfilment or redemption, it says in the Theses, the past is fully incorporated and made present, 'citable in all its moments'.[33] The 'retroactive force' of a redemption that Benjamin sees as both theological and political disposes of a 'secret heliotropism' by which 'the past strives to turn towards that sun which is rising in the sky of history';[34] and the historical materialist can activate these moments by 'brushing history against the grain'.[35] 'Time filled by the presence of the now [*Jetztzeit*]' is contrasted with the apparent time of experience, 'homogeneous, empty time';[36] Benjamin's historical materialist 'cannot do without a notion of a present which is not a transition, but in which time stands still and comes to a stop',[37] a 'Messianic cessation of happening' that contains the 'entire course of history.'[38] The future is a reconciliation with the past: 'Origin is the goal.'[39] Interestingly, Benjamin relates this true time, still, fulfilled and complete, with the same calendar rituals to which Sedlmayr refers: 'the same day that keeps recurring in the guise of holidays, which are days of remembrance. Thus the calendars do not measure time as clocks do'.[40] But, as Benjamin writes in the Theses, echoing Baader's notion of 'silver flashes' of

the true present in man's experience; the time of real experience is nonetheless 'shot through with chips of Messianic time'.[41]

Benjamin's notion of the fragile entry of a Messianic 'now-time' in which the dead past is reconciled into the 'empty' time of the mundane 'historical dynamic' has most often been related to a fusion of mystic and cabbalist tendencies with his reading of the work of Heidegger and Bergson.[42] But Benjamin valued Baader's thought more than Bergson's and Heidegger's. Leo Löwenthal, who knew Benjamin and wrote his own dissertation on Baader, found the mystic's 'religious philosophy of redemptive mysticism and solidarity with society's lowest classes' evident in the Theses.[43] In the case of the notion of *Jetztzeit* with both future and past available, of the present as empty and the past false, I am inclined to see Baader's work as a necessary, if not sufficient, condition of Benjamin's philosophy of time. It is yet another example of the occasionally uncanny kinship between Benjamin and Sedlmayr, thinkers who positioned their thought so very differently; and it represents a strangely suggestive and appealing theology of time of the kind that Gadamer demanded as the only way to refute Heidegger's more linear sense of time in *Dasein*, whose only fulfillment lay within an ecstatic openness towards the future whose authenticity did not preclude the politics of decisionism.

As a theory of the image, its relation to time, and a description of the work of the history of art, Benjamin's conception is also appealing, especially when divested of its theological armature – more, perhaps, than the physiognomic approach to the work of art that is his more obvious intersection with the history of art. For as Susan Buck-Morss has shown, the modernity of Benjamin's philosophy of history is that it is intertwined with a theory of images.[44] If the present is one in which 'images flit by', then the image has modes of being by which it can replace the chronological moment of time as a measure of history. This is a cognitive valence of the image that is perhaps more promising than the one defined by its mimetic potential. The dialectical image is the one produced when the historical image 'flares up briefly', and it can 'blast out of the continuum of history'. As a speculative notion of the relation of image to time, it does not in any way preclude rigour. But it remains speculative. In every way, it must be taken on its own terms. And these, I think, intersect but rarely coincide with ours.

Sedlmayr's ultimately hermeneutic project remains, in all likelihood, closer to current practice. In that, the depth of his critique of historicism was not the precondition of his moving beyond it but rather a symptom of his indissoluble attachment to this way of thinking. The results are clumsy. He too had a sense of that flash, the suddenness with which the *macchia* or the gestalt is grasped, when time stands still, but he had no sense of how to deal with it dialectically. Recall his own conception of the work of the art historian: he or she performs

'thought experiments' on the work of art. Benjamin's sense of criticism as an active engagement and completion of the work of art was similar, but they were not, in the end, speaking of the same thing. Benjamin's notion of the experiment was rigorously speculative, Sedlmayr's unrigorously scientistic. Sedlmayr took this literally: if the experiment was correct, its results could be proved. He claimed to have done so by 'deducing' certain motifs that he was to find 'corroborated' in drawings found later. This faintly absurd and arrogant claim can only be understood within the context of the University of Vienna at the time, a time when the Vienna Circle established its 'verification principle' as the only standard of proof. The younger Vienna School took little from the logical positivists around Moritz Schlick,[45] though they did share the sense of a radical project, of clearing the air of dilettantism and lazy thought, of the rhetoric of certainty. But this quaint *Deus ex machina* from logical positivism that reduces the findings of a history of art to data subjectible to experimental verification would temporalise the image in a way none of the critical theorists would accept. It would doom the image to eternal repetition.

Seeing in Time

> *As strange as it may sound, this present is the object of prophecy. It thus does not presage anything to come. It merely announces what hour has rung. And the politician knows best how much one must be a prophet to say this. We find this concept of the present clearly stated in Turgot. 'Before we are even informed about the current state of affairs,' he writes, 'it has already changed several times over. We always learn too late about what is taking place. And thus one can say that politics is left to predict the present.' One can say the same thing about history.*
>
> – Walter Benjamin, notes for the 'Theses on the Philosophy of History'

> *I can only say, there we have been: but I cannot say where.*
>
> – T. S. Eliot, 'Burnt Norton'[46]

I have looked at a number of instances of what Helmut Lethen has felicitously called the 'uncanny neighbours'[47] in the thought about the visual of the first

part of the last century: the proximity of Adorno's philosophy of art history to conservative critiques of fashion, Benjamin's invocation of exploitative technologies of perception, Ernst Bloch's poaching of illiberal and irrationalist analyses of historical time, the close connection of theories of mimesis to both more and less respectable lines of physiognomic thought. In some cases, such neighbourhoods are defined by the common historical experiences of modernity and a shared set of conceptual resources. In other cases, the proximity is the result of strategic incursions into 'enemy territory'. Walter Benjamin is probably the thinker I have discussed who was most comfortable there; he regularly sought contact with thinkers whose thoughts were deeply questionable (Carl Schmitt, Ludwig Klages and others) as well as those who were most anathema to them (such as Brecht). That this strategy was at least partially conscious is borne out by the accounts of his notorious separation and compartmentalisation of his circles of acquaintances. He did not check the colour of a thought – black, white, red – before trying it out.

Consider his gratitude to the right-wing (and later Nazi) jurist Carl Schmitt, whose political identification of the extreme served Benjamin well, from *The Origin of German Tragic Drama* to the late 'Theses on the Philosophy of History'. The leader, wrote Schmitt, is not the figure empowered by the rule of law, but the one who decides when this rule can be suspended.[48] It was the logic of the exception, the *Ausnahmezustand*, that Schmitt's decisionism made clear to Benjamin. This ethically neutral decisionism is not a politics that Benjamin shared, but he found it of considerable cognitive value. It led him to historical errors – witness his faulty psychology of the expert – but the idea opened his eyes to the historical truth that modernity was composed of instances of exception: 'The tradition of the oppressed teaches us that the "state of emergency" in which we live is not the exception but the rule.'[49] As such, this comfort in enemy intellectual territory is a salutary lesson in not falling into a bad habit: the complacency of rejecting ideas whose authors oblige us by proving, biographically, the failure of their own positions. If, as Benjamin was fond of saying, every piece of knowledge contains a dash of nonsense,[50] then certainly every bit of nonsense contains a splinter of truth. The point is not that one can divorce ideas from their authors, from the historical constellations that produced them and the uses to which they are put, but rather the Blochian lesson that one should not surrender such scorched ideas as embers, when their flames can be fanned from different sides.

Another way of putting this is that, like the present, the valence of a concept or question is likely to have changed several times over before it is grasped (the dialectic of enlightenment is the best example). Facts may be facts, but a *statement* of fact brings one immediately into the realm of prophecy. The critical theorists favoured a visual metaphor for this state of affairs, that of the blind

spot of vision. Ernst Bloch spoke of the 'darkness of the lived moment', Adorno of Benjamin's attempts to focus on the 'blind spots that have escaped the dialectic', Benjamin of the theologically and historically blind entry of the eccentric but knowing body into the world. But I like the image from *Aesthetic Theory* best: the blind spot as the '*vollkommes Dies da*', the new as the 'perfect "look, here!"' This is knowledge held at the moment of epiphany, when something is grasped but not yet named or fought over, when it is seen in its fullness but not yet isolated with a fixed set of conceptual tools. It is a compelling but contingent sort of knowledge, one closely tied to the many experiences of modernity, that one can only, and briefly, try to *see*.

NOTES

Foreword

1 Theodor W. Adorno, *Minima Moralia: Reflexionen aus dem beschädigten Leben*, *Gesammelte Schriften*, ed. Rolf Tiedemann (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1971–86), IV, p. 172; *Minima Moralia: Reflections from Damaged Life*, trans. E. F. N. Jephcott (London: NLB, 1974), p.151 (trans. modified).

2 Adorno, *Gesammelte Schriften*, IV, p. 172; *Minima Moralia*, p. 151.

Fashion

1 Max Horkheimer and Theodor W. Adorno, *Dialektik der Aufklärung: Philosophische Fragmente* (Amsterdam: Querido, 1947), p. 156.

2 In the self-critical historiography of art after 1968 – or the 'new art history', the rubric under which the new historiographical, critical and political concerns have been grouped – the preferred targets have been positivism, the monographic concern with individual artists, and the idealist assumption of art's autonomy. For the most important critical discussions of the concept of style in the history of art, see Meyer Schapiro, 'Style' (1953), reprinted in Meyer Schapiro, *Theory and Philosophy of Art: Style, Artist, and Society* (New York: George Braziller, 1994) and E. H. Gombrich's influential critique *Art and Illusion: A Study in the Psychology of Pictorial Representation*, second edition (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1961), as well as the chapter 'The Psychology of Styles' in his *The Sense of Order: A Study in the Psychology of Decorative Art*, second edition (London: Phaidon, 1984), which contains an analysis of the work of Wölfflin that intersects at several points with my own. See also Willibald Sauerländer, 'From Stilus to Style: Reflections on the Fate of a Notion', *Art History* VI: 3, 1983, pp. 253–70; and the short bibliography in Lorenz Dittmann, *Stil, Symbol, Struktur: Studien zu Kategorien der Kunstgeschichte* (Munich: Fink, 1967), pp. 14–15, n. 4. Hans Belting provides a broad but nuanced overview of the tradition of modern art historiography and a discussion of other aspects of the demise of its models in *The End of the History of Art?*, trans. Christopher S. Wood (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987). An ambitious attempt at an overview of the history of art as the history of styles is Hubert Locher's encyclopaedic *Kunstgeschichte als historische Theorie der Kunst, 1750–1959* (Munich: Wilhelm Fink, 2001).

3 Heinrich Wölfflin, 'Prolegomena zu einer Psychologie der Architektur' (1886), in Wölfflin, *Kleine Schriften*, ed. J. Gantner (Basel: Schwabe, 1946), p. 45. Wölfflin's reference reads 'Weiß, Kostümkunde IV.8.' He is referring to Hermann Weiss, *Kostümkunde*, II, *Geschichte der Tracht und des Geräthes im Mittelalter vom 4ten bis zum 14ten Jahrhundert* (Stuttgart: Ebner & Seubert, 1864), pp. 557–59, 874–80. The 'Prolegomena', an important and often overlooked text, has now been translated in Harry Francis Mallgrave and Eleftherios Ikonomou, eds and trans., *Empathy, Form, and Space: Problems in German Aesthetics, 1873–1893* (Santa Monica, Calif.: The Getty Center for the History of Art and the Humanities, 1994); I have, however, used my own translations here.

4 Wölfflin, 'Prolegomena', pp. 44–45.

5 Wölfflin, 'Prolegomena', p. 46.

6 Heinrich Wölfflin, *Renaissance and Baroque*, 1888, trans. Kathrin Simon (London: Fontana, 1964), p. 79.

7 Heinrich Wölfflin, *Kunstgeschichtliche Grundbegriffe: Das Problem der Stilentwicklung in der neueren Kunst*, third edition (Munich: F. Bruckmann, 1918), p. x. This phrase is from the foreword to the first edition, which does not appear in the translation that I will otherwise cite: *Principles of Art History: The Problem of the Develop-*

ment of Style in Later Art, trans. M. D. Hottinger (New York: Dover, 1950).

8 Wölfflin, *Renaissance and Baroque*, p. 76.

9 Wölfflin, *Renaissance and Baroque*, p. 76. The relation of the history of art to cultural history has been dealt with in a large literature that focuses on the figure of Jacob Burckhardt and a problem loosely (and certainly too loosely) referred to as that of 'Hegelianism'. See in particular E. H. Gombrich, 'In Search of Cultural History', *Ideals and Idols: Essays on Values in History and Art* (Oxford: Phaidon, 1979); Alan Colquhoun, 'E. H. Gombrich and the Hegelian Tradition', *Essays in Architectural Criticism: Modern Architecture and Historical Change* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1981); and Michael Ann Holly, *Panofsky and the Foundations of Art History* (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1984), especially chapter one. Obviously, as Gombrich points out (p. 42), Wölfflin falls prey to some of the traps of 'Hegelianism', though my argument is that this happens even as Wölfflin seeks to steer clear of them. What is interesting is Wölfflin's complex relation to the program of cultural history, to which he had fully subscribed as a student, and to Burckhardt, its foremost representative and the young art historian's mentor. Clearly Wölfflin saw Burckhardt's cultural history as a far more self-reflexive practice than others that went by the same name. The complexity of Burckhardt's thought and his own doubts about the possibility of fulfilling his art-historical project are discussed in Martina Sitt, 'Jacob Burckhardt as Architect of a New Art History', *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* LVII, 1994, pp. 227–42. On the methodological problems of relating cultural products to their larger context, see Karl Mannheim, 'On the Interpretation of *Weltanschauung*', in Mannheim, *Essays on the Sociology of Knowledge*, ed. and trans. P. Kecskemeti (New York: Oxford University Press, 1952), pp. 33–83; on Wölfflin, p. 72. Mannheim's important essay was, significantly, first published in the *Jahrbuch für Kunstgeschichte*, 1921/22.

10 Wölfflin, 'Prolegomena', p. 45.

11 Heinrich Wölfflin, *Classic Art*, 1899, trans. Peter and Linda Murray (London: Phaidon, 1952), p. 287.

12 Wölfflin, *Renaissance and Baroque*, p. 77.

13 Walther Brecht, letter of 15 July 1922 to Paul Kluckhohn, quoted in Christoph König, '"Geistige, private Verbündung": Brecht, Nadler, Benjamin und Hugo von Hofmannsthal', in König and Eberhard Lämmert, eds, *Literaturwissenschaft und Geistesgeschichte, 1910 bis 1925* (Frankfurt am Main: Fischer Taschenbuch Verlag, 1993), p. 156.

14 On Riegl, see Margaret Olin, *Forms of Representation in Alois Riegl's Theory of Art* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1992); Richard Woodfield *et al.*, *Framing Formalism: Riegl's Work* (Amsterdam: G+B Arts International, 2001); and Margaret Iversen, *Alois Riegl: Art History and Theory* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1993), which contains extensive references to the literature on this other pivotal figure in German art history.

15 Wölfflin, *Principles*, p. 11.

16 Wölfflin, *Classic Art*, p. 288.

17 Wölfflin, *Principles*, pp. 11, 17.

18 Wölfflin, *Renaissance and Baroque*, p. 77.

19 Wölfflin, 'Prolegomena', p. 44 (emphasis added). On Wölfflin's reception and use of empathy theory, see Meinhold Lurz, *Heinrich Wölfflin: Biographie einer Kunsttheorie* (Worms: Wernersche Verlagsgesellschaft, 1981); Joan Goldhammer Hart, 'Heinrich Wölfflin: An Intellectual Biography' (PhD thesis, University of California at Berkeley, 1981); and Locher, *Kunstgeschichte als historische Theorie der Kunst*, pp. 380–87. Two recent texts have been important in mapping out the intersection of the history of art and psychology in empathy theory: Mallgrave and Ikonomou, 'Introduction', *Empathy, Form, and Space*, especially pp. 39–56; and Mark Jarzombek, *The Psychologizing of Modernity: Art, Architecture, and History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), especially chapter two. See also Andreas Hauser, 'Grundbegriffliches zu Wölfflin's "Kunstgeschichtlichen Grundbegriffen,"' *Beiträge zu Kunst und Kunstgeschichte um 1900*, *Jahrbuch des Schweizerischen Instituts für Kunstwissenschaft*, 1984–1986, pp. 39–53, an interesting challenge to the central status scholars attribute to empathy in Wölfflin's work.

20 Wölfflin, 'Prolegomena', p. 44.

21 Wölfflin, 'Prolegomena', p. 33.

22 Wölfflin, 'Prolegomena', p. 44.

23 Wölfflin, 'Prolegomena', p. 46.

24 From his notes for the dissertation, it is clear that Wölfflin's primary concern is not the psychological interaction with built form but is instead more traditionally hermeneutic: '[I]n

the last few weeks I have had many good ideas for my dissertation, which will not be purely philosophical but rather an attempt to treat art history philosophically. I shall pose the question: How can architectural forms express the character of a period. What art historians say about this is idle chatter and philosophers generally lack training in art history.' Both his question and his answers remain framed within and determined by these terms. Quoted in Mallgrave and Ikonomov, eds, *Empathy, Form, and Space*, p. 41; see also Hart, 'Heinrich Wölfflin', pp. 90–95, and Lurz, *Heinrich Wölfflin*, pp. 62–64. Mark Jarzombek argues for psychological theory's importance for Wölfflin's work in *The Psychologizing of Modernity*, pp. 37–72.

25 On the establishment of art history as a university discipline, see Heinrich Dilly, *Kunstgeschichte als Institution: Studien zur Geschichte einer Disziplin* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1979), as well as Udo Kultermann's now dated *Geschichte der Kunstgeschichte: Der Weg einer Wissenschaft*, third edition (Munich: Prestel, 1990).

26 On the romantic anti-capitalism of the *Geisteswissenschaften*, see Fritz K. Ringer, *The Decline of the German Mandarins: The German Academic Community, 1890–1933* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1969) and Michael Löwy, *Georg Lukács: From Romanticism to Bolshevism* (London: New Left Books, 1979); on romantic anti-capitalism in general, see Michael Löwy and Robert Sayre, *Romanticism Against the Tide of Modernity*, trans. C. Porter (Durham, N. C.: Duke University Press, 2001). On the German historiographical tradition, see Georg Iggers, *The German Conception of History: The National Tradition of Historical Thought from Herder to the Present*, revised edition (Middletown, Conn.: Wesleyan University Press, 1983).

27 Peter Behrens, 'Über den Zusammenhang des baukünstlerischen Schaffens mit der Technik', *Kongress für Ästhetik und allgemeine Kunstwissenschaft, Berlin 1–9. Oktober 1913* (Stuttgart: F. Enke, 1914), pp. 255, 252.

28 Georg Simmel, *The Philosophy of Money*, 1900/1908, trans. Tom Bottomore and David Frisby (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1978), p. 463.

29 Hermann Muthesius, *Stilarchitektur und Baukunst*, second edition (Mülheim-Ruhr: K. Schimmelpfeng, 1903), p. 49; Muthesius, 'Architektur und Publikum', *Die neue Rundschau* XVIII, 1907, p. 207. Under the pressure of new building types and pedagogical concerns, the problem of the reuse of styles was formulated much earlier in the professional discourse of architecture, most famously in Heinrich Hübsch's *In welchem Style sollen wir bauen?* (Karlsruhe, 1828). See Wolfgang Hermann, ed. and trans., *In What Style Should we Build? The German Debate on Architectural Style* (Santa Monica, Caif.: The Getty Center for the History of Art and the Humanities, 1992). This earlier but continuing debate was carried out with as much passion as, but perhaps less pathos than, the post-Nietzschean discussions, where issues of architectural practice intersected with a broader critique of modernity.

30 J. Gantner, ed., *Heinrich Wölfflin, 1864–1945: Autobiographie, Tagebücher und Briefe*, second edition (Basel: Schwabe, 1984), p. 166.

31 In *The Werkbund: Design Theory and Mass Culture before the First World War* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1996), I explore the way fashion figures in the discourses of sociology and the applied arts in Germany around the turn of the century, and the account of the notion of fashion in cultural criticism I present here is adapted from that longer discussion. On discussions of fashion in Germany, see Silvia Bovenschen, ed., *Die Listen der Mode* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1986), in which several important historical texts are reprinted. On fashion and architectural discourse, see the essays collected in Mary McLeod *et al.*, *Architecture: In Fashion* (Princeton: Princeton Architectural Press, 1994), and Mark Wigley, *White Walls, Designer Dresses: The Fashioning of Modern Architecture* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1995). The more general problem of the rise of consumerism in Germany is discussed in Warren G. Breckman, 'Disciplining Consumption: The Debate about Luxury in Wilhelmine Germany, 1890–1914', *Journal of Social History* XXIV: 3, 1991, pp. 485–505. More recently, Ulrich Lehmann has surveyed discussions of fashion centering on nineteenth- and twentieth-century Paris in *Tigersprung: Fashion in Modernity* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2000).

32 Fritz Schumacher, 'Stil und Mode', in *Im Kampfe um die Kunst: Beiträge zu architektonischen Zeitfragen* (Strasbourg: Heitz, 1899), pp. 24–25.

33 Werner Sombart, *Wirthschaft und Mode: Ein*

Beitrag zur Theorie der modernen Bedarfsgestaltung (Wiesbaden: J. F. Bergmann, 1902), p. 23. This work is a separately published excerpt from the first edition of Sombart's *Der moderne Kapitalismus* (Leipzig: Duncker & Humblot, 1902).

34 Sombart, *Wirthschaft und Mode*, pp. 13, 13, 2, 13 (emphasis in original).

35 Heinrich Pudor, 'Praktische Vorschläge zur Erzielung von Qualitätswaren', *Volkswirtschaftliche Blätter* IX: 15/16, 1910, p. 283.

36 Alexander Elster, 'Wirtschaft und Mode', *Jahrbuch für Nationalökonomie und Statistik*, 3rd ser, 46 (1913): 193; Elster, 'Über die Bedeutung der Mode im Wirtschaftsleben', *Kunstgewerbeblatt*, n. s. XXIV:11 (1913): 208; Walter Troeltsch, *Volkswirtschaftliche Betrachtungen über die Mode* (Marburg: G. Elwert, 1912), pp. 13–14.

37 Karl Widmer, 'Mode und Kunstgewerbe', *Deutsche Kunst und Dekoration* VIII: 4, 1905, p. 254, 252.

38 Sombart, *Wirthschaft und Mode*, p. 21.

39 What is also interesting about such a comparison is how insignificant these changes appear today. To the retrospective eye, differences in anonymous works of the historical past are assumed to represent distance in time or space, whereas we know that meaning in a cultural system is generated by synchronic difference. We look, in other words, with the synthetic eye of the historian, the eye that searches for style; while the slight changes we can dismiss were the ones that held all the meaning and which were immediately evident to the eye of the consumer.

40 Eunice Wilson, *A History of Shoe Fashions* (London: Pitman, 1969), and Roland Barthes, *The Fashion System*, 1967, trans. M. Ward and R. Howard (New York: Hill and Wang, 1983).

41 Werner Sombart, *Kunstgewerbe und Kultur* (Berlin: Marquardt, 1908), p. 45.

42 '. . . die historische Mode mitzumachen und die alten Stilarten ins Kapitalistische zu übersetzen.' Sombart, *Kunstgewerbe und Kultur*, p. 55.

43 Georg Simmel, 'Fashion', in Donald Levine, ed., *Georg Simmel on Individuality and Social Forms* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1971), p. 299.

44 Elster, 'Über die Bedeutung der Mode im Wirtschaftsleben', p. 210.

45 Elster, 'Wirtschaft und Mode', pp. 180–81 (emphasis in original). See also his 'Über die Bedeutung der Mode im Wirtschaftsleben', p. 208. Elster continues: 'One could push these thoughts further, to the problem of whether there is a specific class erotics [*Klassenerotik*] which in its turn influences the transformation of fashion and its efficacy' (p. 189); regrettably, he did not do so.

46 Johannes Gaulke, *Die ästhetische Kultur des Kapitalismus* (Berlin-Tempelhof: Freier Literarischer Verlag, 1909), pp. 98–99.

47 On the unstable male ego of the time, see George L. Mosse, 'Masculinity and the Problem of Decadence', in Roy Porter and Mikulás Teich, eds, *Sexual Knowledge, Sexual Science* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994); and John Fout, 'Sexual Politics in Wilhelmine Germany: The Male Gender Crisis, Moral Purity and Homophobia', in Fout, ed., *Forbidden History: The State, Society and the Regulation of Sexuality in Modern Europe* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1990).

48 Simmel, *Soziologie* (1908), cited in Hellmuth Wolff, 'Aesthetik und Wirtschaftslehre', *Volkswirtschaftliche Blätter* IX: 15/16, 1910, p. 274.

49 Wölfflin, *Renaissance and Baroque*, p. 78.

50 Wölfflin, *Classic Art*, p. 231.

51 Wölfflin, *Renaissance and Baroque*, p. 73.

52 Adolf Göller, 'What is the Cause of Perpetual Style Change in Architecture?', 1887, trans. in *Empathy, Form, and Space*, p. 194. On Göller, see Michael Podro, *The Critical Historians of Art* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1982), pp. 55–58; Mallgrave and Ikonomou, 'Introduction', *Empathy, Form, and Space*, pp. 51–56; and Mitchell Schwarzer, 'Visual Historicism in the Aesthetics of Adolf Göller', *Art History* XVIII: 4, 1995, pp. 568–83.

53 Wölfflin, *Renaissance and Baroque*, pp. 74–75.

54 See Martin Warnke's extraordinary article 'On Heinrich Wölfflin', *Representations* 27, 1989, pp. 172–87, on which this paragraph draws.

55 Style as the expression of the *Volk* returned, however, in Wölfflin's later work, in particular his *Italien und das deutsche Formgefühl* (Munich: Bruckmann, 1931). On this later work, see Nikolaus Meier, 'Italien und das deutsche Formgefühl', in Helmut Pfotenhauer, ed., *Kunstliteratur als Italienerfahrung* (Tübingen: Niemeyer, 1991), pp. 306–27.

56 Wölfflin, *Kunstgeschichtliche Grundbegriffe*, pp. ix–x.

57 Wölfflin, *Principles*, p. 230.

58 Wölfflin, *Principles*, p. 230. On the ultimate

dependence of a history of style on extra-artistic factors, see Mannheim, 'On the Interpretation of *Weltanschauung*', p. 36. Mitchell Schwarzer also touches on this tension in Wölfflin's work; see 'Visual Historicism in the Aesthetics of Adolf Göller', p. 573.

59 Weiss, *Kostümkunde*, p. 57.

60 The 'fashion', writes Weiss, was started by Graf Fulko von Anjou (or Angers), whose shoes were designed to fit his deformed feet (*Kostümkunde*, p. 557). The 'strange fashion of *pointed shoes*' was neither commonly accepted nor seen in any way as appropriate in a religious sense: 'A strict moralist expressed himself quite emphatically about this and related follies of fashion: "These shoes . . . are aimed upwards like snakes' tails or scorpions' or coil unsteadily like rams' horns, a deformation of God's work that is to be deemed blasphemy"' (pp. 874–75; emphasis in original). See also *Kostümkunde*, pp. 877, 880.

61 Max Horkheimer and Theodor W. Adorno, *Dialektik der Aufklärung: Philosophische Fragmente* (Amsterdam: Querido, 1947), p. 144. See also the English translation by John Cumming: *Dialectic of Enlightenment* (New York: Continuum, 1987), p. 120. Though all translations from Adorno and Horkheimer are my own, I shall also cite page numbers from the English translation.

62 Horkheimer and Adorno, *Dialektik der Aufklärung*, p. 149; *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, p. 124.

63 Horkheimer and Adorno, *Dialektik der Aufklärung*, p. 152; *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, p. 127.

64 Horkheimer and Adorno, *Dialektik der Aufklärung*, pp. 152–53; *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, pp. 127–28.

65 Horkheimer and Adorno, *Dialektik der Aufklärung*, p. 153; *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, p. 128.

66 Horkheimer and Adorno, *Dialektik der Aufklärung*, p. 160; *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, p. 134.

67 Horkheimer and Adorno, *Dialektik der Aufklärung*, p. 155; *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, p. 130.

68 Horkheimer and Adorno, *Dialektik der Aufklärung*, p. 171; *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, p. 144.

69 Theodor W. Adorno, 'Zeitlose Mode: Zum Jazz', *Prismen: Kulturkritik und Gesellschaft*, *Gesammelte Schriften* X (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1971–86), pp. 123–37; trans. as 'Perennial Fashion' in *Prisms*, trans. Samuel and Shierry Weber (Cambridge: MIT press, 1981).

70 See Bernard Gendron, 'Theodor Adorno meets the Cadillacs', in Tania Modleski, ed., *Studies in Entertainment: Critical Approaches to Mass Culture* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1986), pp. 18–36, perhaps the most balanced discussion of Adorno on jazz.

71 This fault-line running through Adorno's work has been noted by others. See Andreas Huyssen, 'Adorno in Reverse: From Hollywood to Richard Wagner', *After the Great Divide: Modernism, Mass Culture, Postmodernism* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1986), pp. 16–43; Peter Uwe Hohendahl, 'Reading Mass Culture', *Prismatic Thought: Theodor W. Adorno* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1995), pp. 119–48; and Thomas Y. Levin, 'For the Record: Adorno on Music in the Age of its Technical Reproducibility', *October* 55, 1990, pp. 23–48. Yet Harry Cooper has recently taken issue with this tendency to reread Adorno 'against the grain' in 'On *Über Jazz*: Replaying Adorno with the Grain', *October* 75, 1996, pp. 99–133.

72 Theodor W. Adorno, *Ästhetische Theorie*, *Gesammelte Schriften* VII, p. 286.

73 Adorno, *Gesammelte Schriften* VII, p. 39.

74 Adorno, *Gesammelte Schriften* VII, p. 404.

75 Adorno, *Gesammelte Schriften* VII, pp. 257–58.

76 Adorno, *Gesammelte Schriften* VII, p. 36.

77 On the shudder (*Schauer*) of the new as mimetic, see Adorno, *Gesammelte Schriften* VII, p. 30. On mimesis in Adorno, see Susan Buck-Morss, *The Origin of Negative Dialectics* (Hassocks, Sussex: Harvester, 1977), pp. 85–88; Karla Schultz, *Mimesis on the Move: Theodor W. Adorno's Concept of Imitation* (Bern: Peter Lang, 1990); Albrecht Wellmer, 'Truth, Semblance, Reconciliation: Adorno's Aesthetic Redemption of Modernity', in Wellmer, *The Persistence of Modernity* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1991); as well as chapter four below.

78 Adorno, *Gesammelte Schriften* VII, p. 38.

79 Adorno, *Gesammelte Schriften* VII, p. 37.

80 Adorno, *Gesammelte Schriften* VII, p. 38.

81 Adorno, *Gesammelte Schriften* VII, p. 39.

82 Adorno, *Gesammelte Schriften* VII, p. 40.

83 Adorno, *Gesammelte Schriften* VII, p. 38. Fredric Jameson describes the texture of the new in its privativity with characteristic precision: 'A certain kind of sentence, for example, which one had better no longer indulge in, a feeling or emotion which may be real enough and very widespread but which had best from now on be left out (so that it becomes interesting to see whether you can think of characters who have never had such feelings and could not imagine

them); a boring sound combination, a narrative whose structure makes you impatient, a philosophical argument which one would be embarrassed to repeat, no matter how true it may be. The New, then, is what happens when one excludes these things, providing what results is something other than silence. This is, of course, a reasoning that leads to minimalism by its very internal momentum, and in which minimalist values are somehow structurally inscribed: but more often in the history of modern art the devaluation of the older aesthetic technology, the obsolescence of a whole range of now prohibited contents and forms, has felt like a liberation to which invention responds with a flush of new forms that seems very rich indeed.' Jameson, *Late Marxism: Adorno or The Persistence of the Dialectic* (London: Verso, 1990), pp. 192–93.

84 O. K. Werckmeister, 'Das Kunstwerk als Negation: Zur geschichtlichen Bestimmung der Kunsttheorie Theodor W. Adornos', *Ende der Ästhetik* (Frankfurt am Main: Fischer, 1971), p. 16. This essay, published in its original form in 1961 (and thus nine years before the publication of *Aesthetic Theory*), remains an incisive analysis and critique of Adorno's aesthetics.

85 'The concept of style never quite touched the quality of works; those that seem to represent their style most accurately have always been in conflict with it; style itself was the unity of style and its suspension. Every work is a force-field also in its relation to style.' Adorno, *Gesammelte Schriften* VII, p. 307.

86 Walter Benjamin, *Das Passagen-Werk*, *Gesammelte Schriften* V (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1972–89), p. 111 [B1, 4]. On the centrality of the concept of fashion for Benjamin, see Susan Buck-Morss, *The Dialectics of Seeing: Walter Benjamin and the Arcades Project* (Cambridge: MIT press, 1989) esp. pp. 96–101; Lehmann, *Tigersprung*, chapter four; and my brief discussion of style and fashion in the work of Adorno and Benjamin in *The Werkbund*, pp. 217–22.

87 Adorno, *Gesammelte Schriften* VII, p. 286. In *Theory of the Avant-Garde*, Peter Bürger takes issue with Adorno's assertion of the potential negativity of the new. Yet it should be borne in mind that Bürger's position is contingent upon his interpretation and rejection of the 'neo-avant-garde,' which, he writes, 'stages for a second time the avant-gardiste break with tradition [and] becomes a manifestation that is void of sense and that permits the positing of any meaning whatever.' The question here is whether the historical trajectory that Bürger sketches and the critical distinctions he draws are firm enough ground from which to criticise Adorno's position. See Peter Bürger, *Theory of the Avant-Garde*, trans. M. Shaw (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1984), pp. 59–63; as well as Benjamin Buchloh's review 'Theorizing the Avant-Garde', *Art in America* LXXIX: 10, 1984, p. 19–21.

88 Adorno, *Gesammelte Schriften* VII, p. 265.

89 Klaus Markus Michel, 'Versuch, die "Ästhetische Theorie" zu verstehen', in *Materialien zur ästhetischen Theorie: Theodor W. Adornos Konstruktion der Moderne*, ed. Burkhardt Lindner and W. Martin Lüdke (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1979), pp. 46–47. See also Michel's discussion of the new, pp. 98–104.

90 Adorno, *Gesammelte Schriften* VII, p. 37. On the 'temporal core' (*Zeitkern*) of the work of art and its relation to fashion, see Peter Uwe Hohendahl, 'Philosophy of Art', *Prismatic Thought*, esp. p. 198. Hohendahl also discusses the critique of style briefly in this essay, p. 200.

91 Adorno, *Gesammelte Schriften* VII, p. 468. (I have cited from these 'Paralipomena' at two other points in the above discussion.)

92 Adorno, *Gesammelte Schriften* VII, p. 468.

93 Adorno, *Gesammelte Schriften* VII, pp. 39, 351.

94 Adorno, *Gesammelte Schriften* VII, p. 469.

Distraction

1 Louis Aragon, *Anicet ou le Panorama* (1921; Paris: Gallimard, 1951), pp. 51–52.

2 Vladimir Mayakovsky, 'An Order to the Arts Army', in *For the Voice*, 1923, trans. Peter France (London: The British Library, 2000), p. 33 (trans. modified).

3 From the first version of the essay 'Das Kunstwerk im Zeitalter seiner technischen Reproduzierbarkeit', in Walter Benjamin, *Gesammelte Schriften* I, ed. R. Tiedemann and H. Schweppenhäuser (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1972–89), p. 440.

4 Unless otherwise noted, my references to the Artwork essay will be to the standard English translation, 'The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction', in Benjamin, *Illuminations*, trans. H. Zohn (New York: Schocken, 1968), pp. 231, 232 and 241 (trans. modified). This is a translation of the third German version of the essay, which Benjamin prepared after revising a second version that was then translated into French by Pierre Klossowski; this French version, slightly abridged, is the only one to have appeared in Benjamin's lifetime. I will also cite the original German texts of Benjamin's works as they appear in the *Gesammelte Schriften* I, pp. 492, 493 and 505. Steve Giles discusses in detail the differences between the drafts and their relation to Benjamin's dialogue with Adorno in *Bertolt Brecht and Critical Theory: Marxism, Modernity and the Threepenny Lawsuit* (Bern: Peter Lang, 1997), chapter five.

5 A notable exception is Anthony Vidler's discussion of distraction as a symptom of 'post-Renaissance anxiety' in 'Dead End Street: Walter Benjamin and the Space of Distraction', in Vidler, *Warped Space: Art, Architecture, and Anxiety in Modern Culture* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2000). As Vidler makes clear, architectural theory is the one field where this concept has been explored.

6 Walter Benjamin, 'Über den Begriff der Geschichte', *Gesammelte Schriften* I, p. 695; 'Theses on the Philosophy of History', *Illuminations*, p. 255.

7 Walter Benjamin, *Einbahnstraße*, *Gesammelte Schriften* IV, p. 85; *One-Way Street and Other Writings*, trans. Edmund Jephcott and Kingsley Shorter (London: NLB, 1979), p. 45 (trans. modified).

8 Benjamin, *Gesammelte Schriften* IV, p. 108; *One-Way Street*, p. 66 (trans. modified).

9 For example in *Gesammelte Schriften* III, pp. 187–89 ('Der arkadische Schmock'); and *Gesammelte Schriften* II, p. 383 ('der photographische Schmock').

10 Walter Benjamin, 'Moskauer Tagebuch', *Gesammelte Schriften* VI, p. 305; *Moscow Diary*, ed. Gary Smith, trans. R. Sieburth (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1986), p. 23.

11 The details of Benjamin's biography are widely available. In English, see, most recently and readably, Momme Brodersen, *Walter Benjamin: A Biography*, trans. M. R. Green and I. Ligers (London: Verso, 1996).

12 *G*, published between 1923 and 1926, was edited by Richter, Gräff and Ludwig Mies van der Rohe. The list of thirty-eight names includes El Lissitzky, Ludwig Hilberseimer, Adolf Behne, Kurt Schwitters, Raoul Hausmann, George Grosz and Walter Ruttmann. It is reproduced in Eckhardt Köhn, 'Die Intelligenz des Fotografierenden', in *Sasha Stone, Fotografien 1925–39* (Berlin: Nishen, 1990), p. 9. Benjamin's friend Ernst Schoen, a composer, musician, writer and later radio executive, probably introduced Benjamin to the group. On Benjamin's involvement with the *G* group, see Hans Richter, *Köpfe und Hinterköpfe* (Zurich: Arche, 1967), pp. 69, 87–88; Köhn's very important essay 'Konstruktion des Lebens: Zum Urbanismus der Berliner Avantgarde', *Avant Garde: Revue interdisciplinaire et internationale* I, 1988, pp. 33–72 passim; and now Detlev Schöttker, *Konstruktiver Fragmentarismus: Form und Rezeption der Schriften Walter Benjamins* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1999), pp. 156–66.

13 *i10* was published between 1927 and 1929 by Arthur Müller-Lehning. On *i10* and Müller-Lehning, see the essays and documents in H. Gaßner, K. Kopanski and K. Stengel, eds, *Die Konstruktion der Utopie: Ästhetische Avantgarde und politische Utopie in den 20er Jahren* (Marburg: Jonas, 1992), and the *i10* bibliography compiled by Suzanne Frank in *Oppositions* 7, winter 1976, pp. 67–77. Ten letters from Benjamin to Müller-Lehning are reprinted in Benjamin, *Gesammelte Briefe* III, ed. Christoph Gödde and Henri Lonitz (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1995–2000).

14 'Now on the afternoon in question I was sitting inside the Café des Deux Magots at St.-German-des-Prés. . . . Suddenly, and with compelling force, I was struck by the idea of drawing a diagram of my life, and knew at the same moment exactly how it was to be done. With a very simple question I interrogated my past life, and the answers were inscribed, as if of their own accord, on a sheet of paper that I had with me. A year or two later, when I lost this sheet, I was inconsolable. I have never since been able to restore it as it arose before me then, resembling a

series of family trees.' Walter Benjamin, 'Berliner Chronik', *Gesammelte Schriften* VI, p. 491; 'A Berlin Chronicle', *One-Way Street*, pp. 318–19;.

15 Benjamin's 'Berlin Chronicle' was, in fact, originally dedicated 'to four of my dear friends[:] Sascha [Stone,] Gerhard [Scholem,] Asja Lazis and Fritz Heinle.' On the dedication and Stone, see Gershom Scholem, *Walter Benjamin und sein Engel* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1983), p. 177.

16 Benjamin, *Gesammelte Schriften* IV, p. 89; *One-Way Street*, p. 49 (trans. modified). On improvisation and the Berlin avant-garde, see Köhn, 'Konstruktion des Lebens', pp. 33–35.

17 A. Dambron, 'Sasha Stone', *Gebrauchsgraphik* VII, June 1930, p. 27. For biographical information on Stone, see Köhn, 'Die Intelligenz des Fotografierenden'.

18 Walter Benjamin, 'Kleine Geschichte der Photographie', *Gesammelte Schriften* II, p. 383; 'A Small History of Photography', *One-Way Street*, p. 254 (trans. modified). Stone's statement originally appeared in his essay 'Photo-Kunstgewerbereien', *Das Kunstblatt* 3, 1928, p. 86.

19 See, for example, his montages combining views of different cities such as 'If Berlin were New York', *Sasha Stone, Fotografien 1925–39*, p. 34.

20 Twice, for example, in his 'Small History of Photography': Benjamin, *Gesammelte Schriften* IV, pp. 382, 385; *One-Way Street*, p. 247 (with no mention of Moholy), p. 254 (with a reference to Moholy). Benjamin quotes Moholy directly and cites him as his source in a review of Karl Bloßfeldt, *Urformen der Natur*, 1928, *Gesammelte Schriften* III, p. 151; he paraphrases with no reference in section XIV of the Artwork essay: *Gesammelte Schriften* I, pp. 500–501; *Illuminations*, pp. 237, 249–50. By early 1929 at the latest, Benjamin knew Moholy personally. In a letter of 14 February 1929, he writes to Scholem: '[A] thoroughly delightful physiognomy, though perhaps I have [already] written you about him, is Moholy-Nagy, the former teacher of photography at the Bauhaus.' *Gesammelte Briefe* III, p. 440. Franz Hessel's diary contains a mention of an 'art debate' between Moholy and the composer and director Otto Klemperer in Benjamin's flat on 5 July of the same year; excerpt reprinted in Hans Puttnies and Gary Smith, *Benjaminiana* (Giessen: Anabas, 1991), p. 149. And in an important essay on Benjamin, Adorno also mentions Moholy: 'In the late 20s and early 30s he . . . was in regular contact with Kurt Weill, [Otto] Klemperer, Moholy-Nagy.' Theodor W. Adorno, 'A l'écart de tous les courants', in Adorno, *Gesammelte Schriften* XX, ed. R. Tiedemann (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1971–86), p. 187.

21 Several important notes and fragments on the problem of visual perception and representation have now been translated and appear in Benjamin, *Selected Writings* I, ed. M. Bullock and M. W. Jennings (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1996). These have been studied in greatest depth by Howard Caygill, who considers them in light of the neo-Kantianism prevailing in German philosophy at the time of Benjamin's youth. See Caygill, *Walter Benjamin: The Colour of Experience* (London: Routledge, 1998), and chapter four, below.

22 My references are to the version of 'Dynamik der Gross-Stadt' that appears in the second, 1928, edition of *Malerei, Fotografie, Film*. For the history of this work, see Michael Opitz, 'Laszlo Moholy-Nagys Filmskizze *Dynamik der Gross-Stadt*: Ein Bild-Text der Moderne', *Jahrbuch zur Literatur der Weimarer Republik* III, 1997, pp. 209–36.

23 László Moholy-Nagy, 'Zeitgemäße Typographie: Ziele, Praxis, Kritik', 1925, trans. in Krisztina Passuth, *Moholy-Nagy* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1985), p. 294.

24 Benjamin wrote often of his pleasure over Stone's design. See, for example, his letter to Gershom Scholem of 18 November 1927: 'Yesterday I saw the cover for 'Einbahnstraße'. . . . The dust jacket is one of the most powerful ever. Stone did it. The book will look superb, technically.' *Gesammelte Briefe* III, pp. 302–3.

25 Moholy-Nagy, 'Zeitgemäße Typographie', in Passuth, *Moholy-Nagy*, p. 294.

26 Josef Albers, 'Zur Ökonomie der Schriftform', *Offset: Buch- und Werbekunst* X, 1926, reprinted in Gerd Fleischmann, ed., *Bauhaus: Drucksachen, Typographie, Reklame* (Düsseldorf: Edition Marzona, 1984), p. 23.

27 Benjamin, *Gesammelte Schriften* IV, p. 103; *One-Way Street*, p. 62.

28 László Moholy-Nagy, *Malerei, Fotografie,*

Film, Bauhausbücher VIII, 1925, second edition (Munich: Albert Langen, 1927), p. 38.

29 Benjamin, *Gesammelte Schriften* IV, p. 103; *One-Way Street*, p. 62.

30 Moholy-Nagy, 'Zeitgemäße Typographie', reprinted in Fleischmann, ed., *Bauhaus*, pp. 18–19.

31 I am not the first to do so. In 'Konstruktion des Lebens', Eckhardt Köhn argues for a reading of *One-Way Street* as what he calls 'technical self-representation', a genre he locates in the Berlin avant-garde. My point here is a different one, though I have learned much from Köhn's argument. A recent consideration of *One-Way Street* in relation to constructivism appears in Schöttker, *Konstruktiver Fragmentarismus*, pp. 181–93. A 'surrealist' reading of the book can be found already in Ernst Bloch's review of 1928 in the *Vossische Zeitung*, repr. (slightly altered by the author) in Bloch, *Heritage of Our Times*, trans. N. and S. Plaice (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1990), pp. 334–37. For a recent example of this profitable line of thought, see Josef Fürnkäs, *Surrealismus als Erkenntnis: Walter Benjamin – Weimarer Einbahnstraße und Pariser Passagen* (Stuttgart: Metzler, 1988). I should also add that the approach I take here to Benjamin's analysis of attention in modernity should not be seen as an attempt to deny the importance of the well-known amalgam of Simmel and Freud concerning shocks and memory that emerges in his work on Baudelaire. My intention is simply to establish points of reference more helpful to an understanding of the axis connecting *One-Way Street* and the Artwork essay.

32 On Lissitzky's study of engineering and architecture in both Germany and the Soviet Union, as well as his work in graphics, painting, typography and photography, see Sophie Lissitzky-Küppers, ed., *El Lissitzky: Maler, Architekt, Typograf, Fotograf* (Dresden: Verlag der Kunst, 1967).

33 '4. The design of the book-space, set according to the constraints of printing mechanics, must correspond to the tensions and pressures of content. 5. The design of the book-space using process blocks which issue from the new optics. The supernatural reality of the perfected eye.' El Lissitzky, 'Topographie der Typographie' (1923), trans. in Robin Kinross, *Modern Typography: An Essay in Critical History* (London: Hyphen Press, 1992), p. 87.

34 Our knowledge of precisely what Benjamin read is less complete than is often assumed. He carefully compiled a 'list of works read' ('Verzeichnis der gelesenen Schriften', *Gesammelte Schriften* VII), but his criteria for inclusion are, from our perspective here, surprisingly conservative: only traditional books, and those that he read in their entirety (or nearly so) are included. Magazines, journals and articles, and picture books well documented in his published works do not appear. Thus he does not list Moholy's *Malerei, Fotografie, Film*, though he cites it often; while we can trace every one of the scores of detective novels he consumed. There are other gaps as well, such as the omission of Louis Aragon's *Paysan de Paris*, the reading of which Benjamin famously described in a letter to Adorno in 1935 (Benjamin, *Briefe* II, ed. G. Scholem and T. W. Adorno (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1966), p. 663).

35 Jan Tschichold, *The New Typography* (1928), trans. R. McLean (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1995), p. 224. Several images of the Mayakovsky–Lissitzky project are reproduced in Tschichold's book, which was well known at the time.

36 Benjamin, *Gesammelte Schriften* IV, p. 103; *One-Way Street*, p. 62.

37 Benjamin, *Gesammelte Schriften* I, pp. 504–505; *Illuminations*, p. 240;.

38 László Moholy-Nagy, *Painting, Photographie, Film*, trans. J. Seligman (London: Lund Humphries, 1969), pp. 23–24.

39 Iwan [Jan] Tschichold, introduction to 'elementare typografie', *Typographische Mitteilungen*, XX: X, 1925, 212.

40 Lissitzky discusses 'imaginary' or non-Euclidean space in 'K. und Pangeometry', *Europa-Almanach*, ed. Carl Einstein and Paul Westheim (Potsdam: Gustav Kiepenheuer, 1925), pp. 103–13; trans. as 'A. and Pangeometry' in El Lissitzky, *Russia: An Architecture for World Revolution*, trans. Eric Dluhosch (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1970), pp. 142–49. 'K' ('A') is Lissitzky's abbreviation for 'Kunst' ('Art'). On Lissitzky, see Lissitzky-Küppers, *El Lissitzky*; Peter Nisbet, ed., *El Lissitzky, 1890–1941*, exh. cat. (Cambridge: Harvard University Art Museums, 1987); Victor

Margolin, *The Struggle for Utopia: Rodchenko, Lissitzky, Moholy-Nagy* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1997); and Margarita Tupitsyn, *El Lissitzky: Beyond the Abstract Cabinet* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1999).

41 With this term, I follow Molly Nesbit's important discussions of the relation of abstraction to technical drawing. See 'Ready-Made Originals: The Duchamp Model', *October* 37, 1986; 'The Language of Industry', in Thierry de Duve, ed., *The Definitively Unfinished Marcel Duchamp* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1991); and *Their Common Sense* (London: Black Dog, 2000).

42 The sheet forms part of Lissitzky's first *Kestner Portfolio* of 1923; the room was built for the *Große Berliner Kunstausstellung* of the same year. In addition to the literature on Lissitzky cited above, see the artists' own text in the first issue of *G*: 'Prounenraum', *G: Material zur elementaren Gestaltung* I, 1923, p. 4, trans. in Lissitzky, *Russia: An Architecture for World Revolution*, pp. 138–40.

43 And the room itself, of course, allowed the inhabitant actively to control his experience of the images – their choice, position, and background. See his text 'Exhibition Rooms' (1926/27) reprinted and trans. in Lissitzky, *Russia: An Architecture for World Revolution*, pp. 149–53. This room has been discussed in terms of Benjamin's categories in the Artwork essay in Benjamin H. D. Buchloh, 'From Faktura to Factography', *October* 30, 1984, pp. 91–93.

44 See Yve-Alain Bois's crucial work on Lissitzky and the axonometric, most accessibly in 'El Lissitzky: Radical Reversibility', *Art in America* LXXIV: 4, 1988.

45 Lissitzky, 'K. und Pangeometrie', p. 108; 'A. and Pangeometry', p. 146.

46 Lissitzky, 'K. und Pangeometrie', p. 110; 'A. and Pangeometry', p. 147.

47 Bois, 'El Lissitzky', p. 175.

48 See Erwin Panofsky's refutation of Lissitzky's argument in *Perspective as Symbolic Form* (1927), trans. Christopher S. Wood (New York: Zone Books, 1991), pp. 153–54, n. 73.

49 *Max Taut: Bauten und Pläne. Mit einem Beitrag von Dr. Adolf Behne* (Berlin and Leipzig: F. E. Hübsch, 1927; reprinted Berlin: Gebr. Mann, 1996). Behne's *Neues Wohnen – Neues Bauen* (1927) and *Eine Stunde Architektur* (1928) appear in the 'Verzeichnis der gelesenen Schriften'.

50 Benjamin, *Gesammelte Schriften* I, p. 496; *Illuminations*, p. 233.

51 Benjamin, *Gesammelte Schriften* I, p. 496; *Illuminations*, p. 234.

52 Benjamin, *Gesammelte Schriften* I, pp. 499–500; *Illuminations*, p. 236.

53 Benjamin, *Gesammelte Schriften* I, p. 495; *Illuminations*, p. 232.

54 Benjamin, *Gesammelte Schriften* I, p. 505; *Illuminations*, p. 240 (trans. modified).

55 To my knowledge, a reading that might be considered 'pangeometric' has been successfully pursued only by Howard Caygill in *Walter Benjamin: The Colour of Experience* (London: Routledge, 1998), and Miriam Hansen, 'Benjamin, Cinema, and Experience: "The Blue Flower in the Land of Technology"', *New German Critique* 40, 1987, pp. 179–224. Both, however, consider these aspects of space and time in the Artwork essay only as a matter internal to Benjamin's own work and not in the context of the constructivists. The input of the avant-garde, however, does not give an adequate base from which to explore this aspect of Benjamin's text; we shall have to revisit this in a very different context in chapter four.

56 Paul Valéry, *Eupalinos ou l'architecte* (1921; Paris: Gallimard, 1944). See Schöttker, *Konstruktiver Fragmentarismus*, p. 179.

57 Valéry, 'Les Deux Vertus d'un livre', in *Oeuvres*, ed. Jean Hytier (Paris: Gallimard, 1960), II, p. 1249. The essay appeared first in *Notes sur le livre et le manuscrit* VI, Les Livres du bibliophile (Paris: Stols, 1926) and was reprinted in *Arts et métiers graphiques* I, September 1927, pp. 3–8 as well as in *L'Illustration* CDXL, 10 September 1927, pp. 224–25. See *Oeuvres* II, pp. 1570–71.

58 Valéry, *Oeuvres* II, pp. 1246–47.

59 For indispensible accounts of technologies of vision and attention that provide an archaeology of the spectacle, see Jonathan Crary's *Techniques of the Observer: On Vision and Modernity in the Nineteenth Century* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1990) and *Suspensions of Perception: Attention, Spectacle, and Modern Culture* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1999).

60 Walter Benjamin, *Ursprung des deutschen Trauerspiels*, *Gesammelte Schriften* I, p. 352; *The Origin of German Tragic Drama*, trans.

John Osborne (London: NLB, 1977), p. 176.

61 Benjamin, *Gesammelte Schriften* I, p. 382; *Origin of German Tragic Drama*, p. 208 (trans. modified).

62 The relation of baroque allegory to non-auratic works is discussed usefully in Michael W. Jennings, *Dialectical Images: Walter Benjamin's Theory of Literary Criticism* (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1987), esp. chapter five; Jennings also provides a good overview of Benjamin's debt to Riegl, as does Giles Peaker, 'Works that have Lasted: Walter Benjamin Reading Alois Riegl', in Richard Woodfield *et al.*, *Framing Formalism: Riegl's Work* (Amsterdam: G+B Arts International, 2001). On allegory and the non-auratic work of art, see also Burckhardt Lindner, 'Allegorie', in Michael Opitz and Erdmut Wizisla, eds, *Benjamins Begriffe* I (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 2000), pp. 50–94. The role of allegory and the critical constellation centred upon it in the Arcades Project is treated in detail in Susan Buck-Morss, *The Dialectics of Seeing: Walter Benjamin and the Arcades Project* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1989), part 2, section 6.

63 Carl Linfert, 'Die Grundlagen der Architekturzeichnung. Mit einem Versuch über französische Architekturzeichnungen des 18. Jahrhunderts', *Kunstwissenschaftliche Forschungen* I, 1931, pp. 135–246. The contact between Benjamin and Linfert is discussed in Christina Knorr, 'Walter Benjamins "Ursprung des deutschen Trauerspiels" und die Kunstgeschichte', *Kritische Berichte* XII: 2, 1994, pp. 50–52; 54, n. 35, and Ralf Konersmann, *Erstarrte Unruhe: Walter Benjamins Begriff der Geschichte* (Frankfurt am Main: Fischer, 1991), pp. 109–10. Fourteen of Benjamin's letters to Linfert can be found in *Gesammelte Briefe* IV.

64 Linfert, 'Die Grundlagen der Architekturzeichnung', p. 156.

65 Linfert, 'Die Grundlagen der Architekturzeichnung', p. 229.

66 Linfert, 'Die Grundlagen der Architekturzeichnung', p. 235.

67 Linfert, 'Die Grundlagen der Architekturzeichnung', p. 146.

68 Linfert, 'Die Grundlagen der Architekturzeichnung', p. 134.

69 Linfert, 'Die Grundlagen der Architekturzeichnung', p. 135.

70 Linfert, 'Die Grundlagen der Architekturzeichnung', p. 144.

71 Linfert, 'Die Grundlagen der Architekturzeichnung', p. 143.

72 On Benjamin's reception of Worringer, see Michael W. Jennings, 'Against Expressionism: Materialism and Social Theory in Worringer's *Abstraction and Empathy*', in Neil H. Donahue, ed., *Invisible Cathedrals: The Expressionist Art History of Wilhelm Worringer* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1995), pp. 87–104.

73 Benjamin, *Gesammelte Schriften* VII, p. 678.

74 Richard Hamburger, 'Das psychotechnische Problem in der Ingenieurwissenschaft', *Industrielle Psychotechnik* I (1924), 71.

75 On psychotechnics, see Peter Hinrichs, *Um die Seele des Arbeiters: Arbeitspsychologie, Industrie- und Betriebspsychologie in Deutschland, 1871–1945* (Cologne: Pahl-Rugenstein, 1981); the essays by Irmingard Staeuble, Mitchell Ash, Siegfried Jaeger and Ulfried Geuter in M. Ash and U. Geuter, eds, *Geschichte der deutschen Psychologie im 20. Jahrhundert* (Opladen: Westdeutscher Verlag, 1985); Joan Campbell, *Joy in Work, German Work: The National Debate, 1800–1945* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1989), chapters seven to twelve passim; Anson Rabinbach, *The Human Motor: Energy, Fatigue, and the Origins of Modernity* (New York: Basic Books, 1990), chapters seven to ten passim; and Ulfried Geuter, *The Professionalization of Psychology in Nazi Germany*, trans. R. J. Holmes (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), chapters two to four. Psychotechnics emerged from, and saw itself as part of, a larger field of *Arbeitswissenschaft* or the 'sciences of work'. It had roots not only in experimental psychology but in philosophy, social policy and historical economics (thus one of the early contributions to the problem of the psychology of work came from Max Weber; see his 'Zur Psychophysik der industriellen Arbeit' of 1908–9 in *Gesammelte Aufsätze zur Soziologie und Sozialpolitik* (Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr [Paul Siebeck] 1924). As a field of study, psychotechnics was far broader-based and more intellectually self-conscious than the simpler, and occasionally naïve, problematics of Taylorism and other rationalizing tendencies coming from America. Psychotechnics' reception of Tay-

lorism was therefore largely negative; for one example, see Fritz Giese, *Psychotechnik und Taylorsystem* (Langensalza: Wendt und Klauwell, 1920). The importance of Taylorism is probably to be sought more in the technological imagination of the Weimar era than in business management or occupational psychology, though it did serve in these areas as the focus of debates.

76 C. Heydt, 'Eignungsprüfung für den Rangierdienst', *Industrielle Psychotechnik* I, 1924, p. 140.

77 Heydt, 'Eignungsprüfung für den Rangierdienst', p. 141.

78 'Fireworks from the Lunapark. Speeding along WITH the scenic railway.' Moholy-Nagy, *Malerei, Fotografie, Film*, p. 127; *Painting, Photography, Film*, p. 129. The Luna Park was Berlin's largest amusement park.

79 See, for example, 'Die Aufmerksamkeitswirkung der Reklame', in Theodor König, *Reklame-Psychologie*, third edition (Munich and Berlin: R. Oldenbourg, 1925), pp. 70–114; or 'Aufmerksamkeit und Interesse', in H. F. J. Kropff, *Psychologie in der Reklame* (Stuttgart: C. E. Poeschel, 1934), pp. 108–49.

80 'Bauhaus Dessau: Druckerei u. Reklame-Abteilung', advertisement in *Offset* VII, 1926, reprinted in Fleischmann, ed., *Bauhaus*, p. 12; Moholy-Nagy, 'Die neue Typographie', 1923, reprinted in Fleischman, ed., *Bauhaus*, p. 15. The Bauhaus print and advertising studio was led from 1923 to 1925 by Moholy-Nagy, from 1925 to 1928 by Herbert Bayer, and from 1928 to 1932 by Joost Schmidt. On typography in the Bauhaus studio, see *Das A und O des Bauhauses: Bauhauswerbung – Schriftbilder, Drucksachen, Ausstellungsdesign*, exh. cat. (Berlin: Bauhaus-Archiv, 1995); 'Typographie in der Reklame-Werkstatt', in W. Herzogenrath, ed., *bauhaus utopien: Arbeiten auf Papier* (Stuttgart: Edition Cantz, 1988), pp. 103–15; Ute Brüning, 'Die Druck- und Reklamewerkstatt: Von Typographie zur Werbung', in M. Droste and J. Fiedler, eds, *Experiment Bauhaus* (Berlin: Bauhaus-Archiv, 1988), pp. 154–97; and Fleischmann, ed., *Bauhaus*.

81 Fritz Giese, *Girlkultur: Vergleiche zwischen amerikanischem und europäischem Rhythmus und Lebensgefühl* (Munich: Delphin-Verlag, 1925). On 'Girls' and Giese, see Günther Berghaus, 'Girlkultur: Feminism, Americanism, and Popular Entertainment in Weimar Germany', *Journal of Design History* I: 3/4, 1988, pp. 193–219.

82 Moholy-Nagy, *Malerei, Fotografie, Film*, p. 128; *Painting, Photography, Film*, p. 130.

83 'The Mass Ornament' (1927), in Kracauer, *The Mass Ornament: Weimar Essays*, trans. T. Y. Levin (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1995); and 'Girls and Crisis' (1931), in A. Kaes, M. Jay and E. Dimendberg, eds., *The Weimar Republic Sourcebook* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1994), pp. 565–66.

84 Giese's comments appear in leaflets for the Bauhaus books. One prospectus of 1929 is reproduced in *Das A und O des Bauhauses*, p. 114 ('Whoever has a feeling for the way things will evolve over the next fifty years will sense that the Bauhaus tendency has truly gathered the stones for the foundations of this development. In this sense the book [Moholy's *Malerei, Fotografie, Film*] is to be called a work of genius. It signals one of the most promising directions of thought. Fritz Giese, Stuttgart'). A similar text appears in a flyer of 1927, reprinted in Fleischmann, ed., *Bauhaus*, p. 166. Moholy's entry on 'Bauhaus, Arbeit der' – the only entry on an art institution in the *Handwörterbuch* and, as far as I know, Moholy's only contribution to a scientific publication – appears in Giese, ed., *Handwörterbuch der Arbeitswissenschaft*, two vols. (Halle: Carl Marhold, 1927–30), cols. 654–66, and was published in 1927, when Moholy still taught at the school.

85 'Psychologie und Psychotechnik der Werbung': in the 'studien- und arbeitsplan der werbe-werkstatt, druckerei und fotoabteilung', in the pamphlet *junge menschen, kommt ans bauhaus!*, 1928, Bauhaus-Archiv, Berlin. Reproduced in Fleischmann, ed., *Bauhaus*, pp. 132–33.

86 Riedel was appointed to the 'Meisterkollegium' by Hannes Meyer and was a member from 1929 to 1931. See H. W. Wingler, ed., *The Bauhaus*, trans. W. Jabs and B. Gilbert (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1969), pp. 140, 164 and 487; and Martin Kipp, *Arbeitspädagogik in Deutschland: Johannes Riedel* (Hannover: Hermann Schroedel, 1978), p. 13. Kipp notes that Riedel left because he felt marginalised politically, which is not suprising considering his simultaneous involvement with the DINTA

or German Institute for Technical Vocational Education, founded by the right-leaning engineer Karl Arnhold and funded by politically conservative industrialists. On the DINTA, see Rabinbach, *The Human Motor*, pp. 284–88, and Campbell, *Joy in Work*, chapter eleven. On Riedel and DINTA in the Weimar and Nazi years, see Kipp, 53–67.

87 See the notes of the Dutch student Johannes Jacobus van der Linden (Aufzeichnungen aus dem Unterricht am Bauhaus, 1929–32, Mappe III, Bauhaus-Archiv, Berlin). Van der Linden's notes are for Riedel's lectures on psychotechnics (10855/169–71) and business management (10855/161–68).

88 One might, for example, compare Kandinsky's famous colour questionnaire, canvassing Bauhaus students on the correct synaesthetic correspondence of colours (red, yellow, blue) to shapes (square, triangle, circle), with the attempts to determine levels of attention and pleasure, for men and women separately, corresponding to different colours and colour combinations. On Kandinsky's questionnaire, see Rainer Wick, *Bauhaus-Pädagogik* (Cologne: Dumont, 1982), pp. 202–6; for a summary of research into poster colour combinations, see König, *Reklame-Psychologie*, pp. 45–50, 61–65 and 176–81.

89 Moholy-Nagy, *Malerei, Fotografie, Film*, p. 37.

90 Moholy-Nagy, 'Produktion – Reproduktion', trans. in Passuth, *Moholy-Nagy*, p. 289.

91 Moholy-Nagy, 'Produktion – Reproduktion', p. 289.

92 H. Schulz, 'Die Ermüdung des Auges', *Industrielle Psychotechnik* II, 1925, p. 5.

93 H. Schulz, 'Die Ermüdung des Auges', p. 5.

94 Friedrich Wilhelm Hartwig, 'Die wirtschaftspsychologische Betrachtung der Lichtreklame und ihr Verhältnis zur Reklame in wirtschaftspolitischer Hinsicht', Inaugural-Dissertation, University of Leipzig, 1927, pp. 11–12.

95 Moholy-Nagy, *Painting, Photography, Film*, p. 38.

96 Moholy-Nagy, *Malerei, Fotografie, Film*, p. 124.

97 For Benjamin, only labour mediated by the machine is performed in a state of distraction corresponding to cinema (producing the kind of non-cumulative experience he terms *Erlebnis*); he relates traditional craft labour to the concentration of the traditional work of art (and the communicable and cumulative experience he terms *Erfahrung*). His typology of experience and labour is discussed with great insight in Esther Leslie, 'Walter Benjamin: Traces of Craft', *Journal of Design History* XI: 1, 1998, pp. 5–13.

98 Since Benjamin wrote his essay in France, his example of this sort of criticism, Georges Duhamel, is French. Benjamin, *Gesammelte Schriften* I, pp. 503–4; *Illuminations*, pp. 238–39.

99 Siegfried Kracauer, 'Cult of Distraction', (1926), in *The Mass Ornament*.

100 Benjamin, *Gesammelte Schriften* I, p. 502; *Illuminations*, p. 238.

101 Wilhelm Wundt, *Einführung in die Psychologie* (Leipzig: R. Voigtländer, 1911), pp. 23–24; *An Introduction to Psychology*, trans. R. Pinter (London: George Allen, 1912), pp. 35–36 (trans. modified).

102 'Spotlights shower their beams into the auditorium, sprinkling across festive drapes or rippling through colorful, organic-looking glass fixtures. The orchestra asserts itself as an independent power, its acoustic production buttressed by the responsory of the lighting. Every emotion is accorded its own acoustic expression and its color value in the spectrum – a visual and acoustic kaleidoscope that provides the setting for the physical activity on stage: pantomine and ballet. Until finally the white surface descends and the events of the three-dimensional stage blend imperceptibly into two-dimensional illusions'. Kracauer, 'Cult of Distraction', p. 324.

103 Kracauer, 'Cult of Distraction', pp. 325–26. Compare Georges Duhamel, *Scènes de la vie future*, second edition (1930) as quoted by Benjamin: 'I can no longer think what I want to think. My thoughts have been replaced by moving images', *Gesammelte Schriften* I, p. 503; *Illuminations*, p. 238.

104 The psychologist and psychotechnician Hugo Münsterberg disagrees, seeing voluntary attention as decisive in the viewing of stage drama and film (the reception of which he equates). Münsterberg, *The Photoplay: A Psychological Study* (New York: D. Appleton, 1916), chapter four ('Attention').

105 Richard Couvé, 'Bericht über die psychotechnische Untersuchung von zwei Einsenbahnzugszusammenstößen', *Industrielle Psychotechnik* I, 1924, p. 162.

106 Benjamin, *Gesammelte Schriften* I, p. 503; *Illuminations*, p. 250.

107 Benjamin, *Gesammelte Schriften* I, p. 503; *Illuminations*, p. 238 (trans. modified).

108 K. A. Tramm, 'Die Bewährung des psychotechnischen Prüfverfahrens für Straßenbahnführer', *Industrielle Psychotechnik* I, 1924, p. 37.

109 See the passage from his Moscow diary dated 29 January 1927, describing his failed attempt to board a streetcar while distracted: '[N]ot far from the house a streetcar literally passed right under our noses. We continued in the direction of Revolution Square – Rachlin probably thought it would be better to wait there because there were more streetcar lines. . . . It was not the walking that I found fatiguing, rather the conversation with all its innuendos and misunderstandings had so worn me down that it was out of sheer feebleness that I said yes when she asked me if we should hop on a streetcar that happened to be passing by. Admittedly, I had made the error of calling her attention to this streetcar with my eyes, otherwise she wouldn't have noticed it. She was already standing on its platform and it was gradually picking up speed, so I ran alongside it for a few steps but did not hop on. She shouted to me 'I'll wait [for] you there'. . . . She must have waited [only] a short time because when I arrived she was nowhere to be found.' Benjamin, *Gesammelte Schriften* IV, pp. 397–98; *Moscow Diary*, pp. 111–12.

110 Benjamin, *Gesammelte Schriften* I, p. 1049.

111 Benjamin, *Gesammelte Schriften* I, p. 505; *Illuminations*, p. 241 (trans. modified).

112 Dr.-Ing. [Johannes] Riedel, 'Bemerkungen zur Eignungsprüfung bei Fahrzeugführerberufen', *Zeitschrift für angewandte Psychologie* XIX, 1921, pp. 203.

113 Maria Schorn, 'Monotonie der Arbeit', in Giese, ed., *Handwörterbuch der Arbeitwissenschaft*, col. 3364.

114 Benjamin thought much, of course, about the 'hand motion' (*Handgriff*) and the 'gestures produced in automated labor' (*vom automatischen Arbeitsgang ausgelöste Gebärde*): they are central to his analysis of the experience of shocks and their relation to mechanised labour and gambling in his work on Baudelaire. See Benjamin, "Über einige Motive bei Baudelaire', *Gesammelte Schriften* I, pp. 630, 633; 'Some Motifs in Baudelaire', in Benjamin, *Charles Baudelaire: A Lyric Poet in the Era of High Capitalism*, trans. H. Zohn (London: New Left Books, 1973), pp. 131, 134 (trans. modified).

115 König, *Reklame-Psychologie*, pp. 70, 72–75 and 106–9.

116 Benjamin, *Gesammelte Schriften* I, p. 497; *Illuminations*, p. 234.

117 Indeed, we should say that he fails to argue the matter through adequately in *this* essay. Benjamin was surely aware of the difference between voluntary and involuntary attention, but, oddly, cinema, labour and traffic did not provide him with concepts with which to think it through. As we shall see in chapter four, below, the notion around which Benjamin explored the problem and paradoxes of 'presence of mind' was that of *gambling*; here he began to think through a kind of quick, accurate, habitual kind of action precisely where one thought *least*.

118 A. Kolodnaja, 'Beiträge zur Berufsanalyse des Lokomotivführerberufes', *Industrielle Psychotechnik* V, 1928, p. 278.

119 'Constructivism and the Proletariat' (1922), trans. in R. Kostelanetz, ed., *Moholy-Nagy* (New York: Praeger, 1970), p. 186. Kostelanetz and Sibyl Moholy-Nagy attribute this text to Moholy-Nagy, but it appears signed by Egon Egelien in *Ma*, May 1923. See Eleanor M. Hight, *Picturing Modernism: Moholy-Nagy and Photography in Weimar Germany* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1995), p. 218, n. 2; and Margolin, *The Struggle for Utopia*, p. 66, n. 70.

120 Benjamin, *Gesammelte Schriften* I, p. 450.

121 Benjamin, *Gesammelte Schriften* I, p. 488; *Illuminations*, p. 246.

122 Benjamin, *Gesammelte Schriften* I, p. 488; *Illuminations*, pp. 228–29.

123 Benjamin was in fact related (by marriage) to a prominent psychologist: William Stern (1871–1938), professor in Breslau, Hamburg, then in the US, was married to his cousin Clara. Benjamin often refers to Stern in letters as his 'cousin' as well. Stern was coeditor of the *Zeitschrift für angewandte Psychologie*, in which many articles of a psychotechnical nature appeared. In 1913, Benjamin read through all of the volumes of the *Zeitschrift* to have appeared by that date; he was looking into issues of pedagogy in the

context of his role in the youth movement around Gustav Wyneken. See his letter to Wyneken of 19 June 1913 in Benjamin, *Gesammelte Briefe* I, pp. 115–19. On other aspects of Benjamin's interest in psychotechnics and occupational psychology, see Brigid Doherty, 'Test and *Gestus* in Brecht and Benjamin', *MLN* CXV: 3, 2000, pp. 442–81.

124 The characterisation of Tretyakov's audience is Johannes R. Becher's, and it is negative. It appeared in *Linkskurve*, the organ of the Bund proletarisch-revolutionärer Schriftsteller, an organisation much closer to the official Soviet cultural policy of the time than Tretyakov was. See Helga Gallas, *Marxistische Literaturtheorie* (Neuwied and Berlin: Luchterhand, 1971), p. 124. Tretyakov held a lecture on 'The Writer and the Socialist Village' in Berlin on 21 January 1931, and repeated it in several other cities in Germany and Austria. Kracauer reports on a lecture with similar contents held in Berlin in April of the same year (probably 19 April). See Hugh Ridley, 'Tretjakov in Berlin', in K. Bullivant, ed., *Culture and Society in the Weimar Republic* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1977); Fritz Mierau, 'Tatsache und Tendenz: Der "operierende" Schriftsteller Sergej Tretjakow', in Tretjakow, *Lyrik, Dramatik, Prosa*, ed. F. Mierau (Leipzig: Reclam, 1972), pp. 502–10; and Siegfried Kracauer, 'Instruktionsstunde in Literatur: Zu einem Vortrag des Russen Tretjakow', *Frankfurter Zeitung*, 26 April 1931, reprinted in Kracauer, *Schriften* V: 2 (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1990), pp. 308–11. 'Der Schriftsteller und das sozialistische Dorf' is reprinted in Sergej Tretjakov, *Die Arbeit des Schriftstellers*, ed. H. Boehncke (Reinbek: Rowohlt, 1972), pp. 117–34. Of course, Brecht too wrote of the expert as cultural subject: see 'The Literarization of the Theatre (Notes to the *Threepenny Opera*', in John Willett, ed., *Brecht on Theatre* (London: Methuen, 1964), p. 44 ('As he reads the projections on the screen the spectator adopts an attitude of smoking-and-watching. . . . By these means one would soon have a theatre full of experts, just as one has sporting arenas full of experts'). These ideas were developed in close symbiosis with Benjamin. On Benjamin and Brecht, see Giles, *Bertolt Brecht and Critical Theory*.

125 Kracauer, 'Instruktionsstunde in Literatur', p. 309.

126 Kracauer frames his discussion around an essay by Peter Suhrkamp, which takes journalism as paradigmatic of a modern form of writing. Kracauer, who would have known of the connections of both Suhrkamp and Tretyakov to Brecht, relates the ideas to the 'new type of the writer' that Tretjakov had discussed. Kracauer, 'Über den Schriftsteller', *Die neue Rundschau* XLII, 1931, reprinted in *Schriften* V: ii, pp. 343–46. Suhrkamp's essay appears in O. von der Gablentz and C. Mennicke, eds, *Deutsche Berufskunde: Ein Querschnitt durch die Berufe und Arbeitskreise der Gegenwart* (Leipzig: Bibliographisches Institut, 1930), in which he also wrote on education and artistic professions. On Brecht's conception of the 'theatre full of experts (*Fachleute*)', see Benjamin, 'Was ist das epische Theater?' (first version), *Gesammelte Schriften* II, p. 522; 'What is Epic Theatre' (First Version), in Benjamin, *Understanding Brecht*, trans. A. Bostock, ed. S. Mitchell (London: New Left Books, 1973), p. 4. Benjamin is quoting Brecht, *Versuche* III, 1931, trans. in John Willett, ed. and trans., *Brecht on Theatre* (London: Methuen, 1964), p. 44. On Tretyakov, Brecht and Benjamin, see Heinz Brüggemann, *Literarische Technik und soziale Revolution* (Reinbek: Rowohlt, 1973), pp. 139–64.

127 Kracauer, 'Der Fachmann', *Die neue Rundschau* XLII, 1931, reprinted in *Schriften* V: 2, p. 402. This reconsideration of the issue was certainly informed by Max Weber's discussion of bureaucratization in *Wirtschaft und Gesellschaft*. See 'Bureaucracy' in H. H. Gerth and C. Wright Mills, eds and trans., *From Max Weber* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1946), pp. 195–252. And in his landmark lecture 'Politik als Beruf' of 1918, Weber stressed the specialization of the expert as a particular problem in Germany; see 'Politics as Vocation', in *From Max Weber*, esp. p. 111.

128 Benjamin cites Tretyakov's *Feld-Herren* (Berlin: Malik-Verlag, 1931), in which Tretyakov describes his own role as an 'operative writer'. Benjamin, 'Der Autor als Produzent', *Gesammelte Schriften* II, pp. 686–87; 'The Author as Producer', in Benjamin, *Reflections*, trans. E. Jephcott (New York: Schocken, 1986), pp. 223–24. On Benjamin and Tretyakov, see Chryssoula Kambas, *Walter Benjamin im Exil: Zum*

Verhältnis von Literaturpolitik und Ästhetik (Tübingen: Niemeyer, 1983), pp. 39–45 and Maria Gough, 'Paris, Capital of the Soviet Avant-Garde', *October* 101, 2002, which discusses the importance of these lectures for 'The Author as Producer'. Before this, Benjamin seems to have responded positively to Tretyakov in a note on radio written by November of 1931; here he describes the necessity of radio to 'win the public over to its side as experts (*Sachverständigen*).' Benjamin, *Gesammelte Schriften* II, p. 1507, quoted in Doherty, 'Test and *Gestus* in Brecht and Benjamin', p. 448.

129 This fragment appears in the notes for a planned lecture cycle on 'L'Avantgarde allemande', which was never held. Benjamin, *Gesammelte Schriften* VI, pp. 182–83.

130 In the late 1920s, Kracauer was an editor of the *Frankfurter Zeitung*'s feuilleton; from 1930, he headed the feuilleton's Berlin bureau. He was an important source of commissions for reviews and publisher of other occasional pieces. In the mid-1930s, Kracauer was, like Benjamin, in exile in Paris. On the relations between the two, see Hans Puttnies and Gary Smith, *Benjaminiana*, p. 34. This delay in their dialogue might also be one reason behind the temporal inappropriateness of Benjamin's recourse to Tretyakov, by that time utterly out of favour with Soviet cultural authorities.

131 Stone's inventions in the realm of artillery and automobile engines are discussed by Köhn in *Sasha Stone*, p. 7. One should also note the emphasis placed on Stone's (apocryphal?) work with Thomas Edison in the biographical sketch that appeared in *Gebrauchsgraphik*; see n. 88, above.

132 On the making of the 1922 'Telephone Paintings', see László Moholy-Nagy, *The New Vision and Abstract of an Artist* (1929), trans. D. M. Hoffman (New York: Wittenborn, 1947), pp. 79–80; and Sibyl Moholy-Nagy, *Moholy-Nagy: Experiment in Totality* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1969), pp. 43–44. Moholy's then-wife Lucia was an active photographer since the end of the 1910s. On her claim regarding Moholy's lack of technical expertise and her involvement in his photographic work, see Rolf Sachsse, *Lucia Moholy, Bauhaus Fotografin* (Berlin: Bauhaus-Archiv, 1995).

133 The colour of Moholy's overalls is identified in Irene-Charlotte Lusk, *Montagen ins Blaue: László Moholy-Nagy, Fotomontagen und-collagen 1922–1943* (Giessen: Anabas, 1980), p. 2.

134 Molzahn, for example, wrote in the Werkbund's organ *Die Form*: 'The attempts of a contemporary psychology of advertising to measure advertising effectiveness are highly misleading.' However, his rhetoric of turnover, efficiency, and circulation makes it clear that he is positioning his own work within another 'scientific' discourse: economics. Johannes Molzahn, 'Ökonomie der Reklame-Mechane', *Die Form* VII, 1926, pp. 141–45. For the texts of the New Typographers, see the exhibition catalogues '*Typographie kann unter Umständen Kunst sein*', four vols. (Hannover: Sprengel Museum, 1990), and Fleischmann, ed., *Bauhaus*, pp. 328–50.

135 The main exponent of this tendency was Hanns F. J. Kropff, who coordinated the advertising for the cosmetics firm Elida. See H. F. J. Kropff, *Psychologie in der Reklame* (Stuttgart: C. E. Poeschel, 1934). The most up-to-date historical account of advertising in Germany, and the one I rely on here, is Dirk Reinhardt, *Von der Reklame zum Marketing: Geschichte der Wirtschaftswerbund in Deutschland* (Berlin: Akademie-Verlag, 1993), esp. part two.

136 Because this business form was new and short-lived, it never established any more than an improvised and informal mode of self-presentation. The self-promotion of the independent advertising professionals of the avant-garde appeared in programmatic publications such as *Gefesselter Blick* Heinz and Bodo Rasch, eds (Stuttgart: Wissenschafter Verlag Dr Zaugg, 1930), which contains brief biographies, statements and contact information for the artists whose work is included; it functions as a guide to and prospectus for practitioners in the new typographical mode. See also the list of names and contact addresses included in Tschichold's *The New Typography*, p. 235. The most official forum for the independent practitioners was the formation of the *ring 'neue werbegestalter'* in 1928 by Kurt Schwitters; it served until 1933 as a network and exhibiting society. See *Ring 'neue werbegestalter', 1928–1933: Ein Überblick* (Hannover: Sprengel Museum, 1990). On Bayer's

work for Dorland in Berlin from 1928 to 1939, see Magdalena Droste *et al.*, *Herbert Bayer: Das künstlerische Werk, 1918–1938* (Berlin: Bauhaus-Archiv, 1982), pp. 62–77. For a nuanced account of typography as a profession, see Jeremy Aynsley, *Graphic Design in Germany, 1890–1945* (London: Thames and Hudson, 2000).

137 The psychologists' rejection of philosophy as a route to university chairs and their turn to the sciences as part of a professionalising strategy is described in great detail in Ulfried Geuter, *The Professionalization of Psychology in Nazi Germany*, trans. R. J. Holmes (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), chapter two. See also Rabinbach, *The Human Motor*, pp. 278–79.

138 See Hinrichs, *Um die Seele des Arbeiters*, p. 47; and Geuter, *The Professionalization of Psychology*, p. 132.

139 Giese became, in Peter Hinrichs's words, 'the leading figure of a Fascist science of work': Hinrichs, *Um die Seele des Arbeiters*, pp. 78, 290ff. Riedel's career under national socialism is discussed in Kipp, *Arbeitspädagogik in Deutschland*, chapters nine to fourteen. On psychotechnics, its advocates, and the Third Reich, see also Campbell, *Joy in Work*, chapters thirteen and fourteen. It is important, however, to point out that the psychotechnicians' opportunism has less to do with any essential quality of the knowledge with which they dealt than with a strategy that sought to couple this knowledge with certain kinds of authority and institutional status. There is, in other words, no teleology that leads psychotechnics to fascism.

140 See the entry under 'Advertising' in Giese's *Handwörterbuch der Arbeitswissenschaft*: 'Advertising must not be organized according to rules of thumb and accident. It must be coordinated on a solid basis.' 'Reklame', in Giese, ed., col. 3768.

141 For example, Hans Meyer, 'Psychotechnik in der Reklame', *Gebrauchsgraphik* I: 9, 1924/25, pp. 7–18. On *Gebrauchsgraphik* and the graphic arts profession, see Jeremy Aynsley, '*Gebrauchsgraphik* as an Early Graphic Design Journal, 1924–1938', *Journal of Design History* v, 1992, pp. 53–72.

142 Herbert Bayer, 'typografie und werbsachengestaltung', *bauhaus* II: 1 (1928): 10.

143 See, most famously, the chapter 'Auslese' in Siegfried Kracauer's *Die Angestellten* (1930; Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1971); 'Selection', in Kracauer, *The Salaried Masses: Duty and Distraction in Weimar Germany*, trans. Quintin Hoare (London: Verso, 1998).

144 Kracauer, 'Deutsche Berufskunde', *Schriften* V: 2, p. 265.

145 Ottoheinz von der Gablentz, 'Einleitung: Politische Volkskunde', in *Deutsche Berufskunde. Ein Querschnitt durch die Berufe und Arbeitskreise der Gegenwart*, O. von der Gablentz and Carl Mennicke, eds (Leipzig: Bibliographisches Institut, 1930), p. 8.

146 Kracauer, 'Deutsche Berufskunde', p. 267.

147 Benjamin, *Gesammelte Schriften* II, pp. 383–84; *One-Way Street*, p. 255.

148 For an important discussion of the work of Sander, class and labour, see Andrew Jones, 'Reading August Sander's Archive', *Oxford Art Journal* XXIII: 1, 2000. Benjamin discusses Sander in 'A Small History of Photography', pp. 251–54; *Gesammelte Schriften* II, pp. 380–83.

149 Sergei Tretyakov, *Feld-Herren*, 1931, reprinted in Tretjakow, *Lyrik, Dramatik, Prosa*, p. 156.

150 The Soviet's need for 'bourgeois experts' during the NEP is discussed briefly in Leah Dickerman, 'The Propagandizing of Things', in Magdalena Dabrowski, ed., *Aleksandr Rodchenko*, exh. cat. (New York: Museum of Modern Art, 1998), p. 66. See also Sheila Fitzpatrick, 'The Problem of Class Identity in NEP Society', in Fitzpatrick, Alexander Rabinowitch and Richard Stites, eds, *Russia in the Era of NEP: Explorations in Soviet Society and Culture* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1991), p. 20. On the move from a reliance on 'bourgeois experts' to the training of 'Soviet experts', see the discussion of the Soviet intelligentsia in Fitzpatrick, 'Cultural Revolution as Class War', in Fitzpatrick, ed., *Cultural Revolution in Russia, 1928–1931* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1978), pp. 8–40.

151 The term '*Psychotechniker*' was used almost exclusively to refer to non-academically trained practitioners; see Giese, *Theorie der Psychotechnik* (Braunschweig: Vieweg, 1925), p. 2; and Siegfried Jaeger, 'Zur Herausbildung von Praxisfeldern der Psychologie bis 1933', in M. Ash and U. Geuter, eds, *Geschichte der deutschen Psychologie im 20. Jahrhundert* (Opladen: Westdeutscher Verlag, 1985), p.

103. Hinrichs writes that most of those trained in Walther Moede's Institut für Psychotechnik at the TH Charlottenburg (Berlin), the most prominent of the insititutes, were 'engineers': see Hinrichs, *Um die Seele des Arbeiters*, p. 226. The Psychotechnische Institut of the TH Darmstadt sought to train 'psychotechnically schooled engineers': *Industrielle Psychotechnik* I, 1924/25, pp. 58–59.

152 In the classification of the *Deutsche Berufskunde*, engineers are classed as part of a broad range of 'technical employees' and undifferentiated from others: 'For "technical employees," there are three different tracks in terms of training: the academics, the middle-school technicians, and the traditional masters. In today's industry, there are 228,844 "technical employees and experts (*Fachpersonal*)" and 298,148 "foremen and supervisors." The division according to training has nothing to do with these statistics. Managers (whatever their training) are not included; and in the group of technical employees and even amongst the foremen there are academic engineers, middle-school technicians and technicians with no particular education.' Von der Gablentz, 'Die Industrie', in *Deutsche Berufskunde*, p. 145. The history of the professionalisation of engineering in Germany is that of the efforts of those with academic degrees to distinguish themselves from those with vocational or on-the-job training and to achieve social and financial parity with those who had humanistic degrees from the traditional universities. In an analysis similar to von der Gablentz's, Hans Speier classes engineers as 'technical employees' and describes the tension between two main groups, the academics asserting their distinction from non-academics and parity with university graduates, and the non-academics asserting distinction from industrial workers and parity with the academics. Each group was represented by a different professional organisation (The *Verband deutscher Diplom-Ingenieure* or Association of German Academic Engineers and the *Bund der technisch-industriellen Beamten* or Association of Technical-Industrial Employees, respectively). Hans Speier, *German White-Collar Workers and the Rise of Hitler* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1986), pp. 18–22. Neither group prevailed: Mary Nolan writes that Weimar engineers of all kinds 'enjoyed neither economic security nor social status' due to their 'incomplete professionalisation', and that because 'the line between engineers and technicians could not be drawn with clarity', their position was 'ambivalent and contradictory'. Mary Nolan, *Visions of Modernity: American Business and the Modernization of Germany* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994), p. 184. On professionalization in Germany and the problem of engineers, see Konrad H. Jarausch, *The Unfree Professions: German Lawyers, Teachers, and Engineers 1900–1950* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990); and Charles E. McClelland, *The German Experience of Professionalization* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991).

153 Benjamin, *Gesammelte Schriften* IV, p. 83; *One-Way Street*, p. 45.

154 Arnolt Bronnen, *O. S.* (1929; Klagenfurt: Ritter, 1995), p. 36.

155 On skilled workers and the problem of 'embourgeoisement', see H. A. Winkler, *Der Schein der Normalität: Arbeiter und Arbeiterbewegung in der Weimar Republik, 1924 bis 1930*, second edition (Berlin and Bonn: Dietz, 1988), pp. 161–73; Winkler, *Der Weg in die Katastrophe: Arbeiter und Arbeiterbewegung in der Weimar Republik, 1930 bis 1933* (Berlin and Bonn: Dietz, 1987), pp. 100–19; and Hans Speier, 'The Worker Turning Bourgeois' (1931), trans. in Speier, *Social Order and the Risks of War* (New York: G. W. Stewart, 1952), pp. 53–67. On the position of 'monteurs of all kinds' in the proletariat, see Carl Mennicke, 'Handwerk und Proletariat', *Deutsche Berufskunde*, p. 76.

156 Benjamin, *Gesammelte Schriften* VI, p. 526; 'Conversations with Brecht', *Understanding Brecht*, trans. A. Bostock (London: NLB, 1977), p. 108.

157 Benjamin, *Gesammelte Schriften* I, p. 693; *Illuminations*, p. 253.

158 Benjamin, *Gesammelte Schriften* I, p. 695; *Illuminations*, p. 255.

159 Benjamin, *Gesammelte Schriften* I, p. 694, *Illuminations*, p. 254.

Nonsimultaneity

1 'Mein Erbteil wie herrlich, weit und breit! /Die Zeit ist mein Besitz, mein Acker ist die Zeit', Goethe, *Gedenkausgabe* VIII (Zurich: Artemis, 1949), p. 9.

2 Ernst Bloch, *Erbschaft dieser Zeit*, *Werkausgabe* IX (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1985); this edition is translated by Neville Plaice and Stephen Plaice as *Heritage of Our Times* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1990). I will refer both to the German original (as *Erbschaft*) and the excellent English translation (as *Heritage*), though I have often modified the latter where I feel that a particular nuance is important. The first edition of *Erbschaft dieser Zeit* (Zurich: Oprecht & Helbling, 1935) does not contain many texts that Bloch later added; it also includes some texts that Bloch later revised and incorporated in different ways. All of the passages I discuss appeared in the book as it was originally published; where they do not appear in the revised edition of the *Werkausgabe*, I will refer to the first edition. The book was actually published on 27 October 1934; see Ernst Bloch, *Briefe*, ed. Karola Bloch *et al.* II (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1985), pp. 465, 657 n. 2.

3 On the expressionism debate, see Hans-Jürgen Schmitt, ed., *Die Expressionismusdebatte: Materialien zu einer marxistischen Realismuskonzeption* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1973); Ernst Bloch *et al.*, *Aesthetics and Politics* (London: New Left Books, 1977).

4 Dagmar Barnouw, *Critical Realism: History, Photography, and the Work of Siegfried Kracauer* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1994), pp. 101–2.

5 On relations between Bloch and Benjamin, see Peter Zudeick, *Der Hintern des Teufels: Ernst Bloch, Leben und Werk* (Moos: Elster, 1987), pp. 102–4, 119. On Benjamin's and his friend Gershom Scholem's accusations that Bloch plagiarised ('stole') from Benjamin, see their exchange of letters in 1935 in Scholem, ed., *The Correspondence of Walter Benjamin and Gershom Scholem, 1932–1940*, trans. Gary Smith and Andre Lefevere (New York: Schocken, 1989), pp. 165–67.

6 Walter Benjamin, *Gesammelte Briefe*, ed. Christoph Gödde and Henri Lonitz IV (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1995–2000), p. 550; *The Correspondence of Walter Benjamin and Gershom Scholem*, p. 148 (trans. modified).

7 Benjamin, *Gesammelte Briefe* IV, pp. 554–55.

8 Letter to Alfred Cohn, 6 February 1935, in Benjamin, *Gesammelte Briefe*, V, pp. 38; *The Correspondence of Walter Benjamin, 1910–1940*, trans. M. R. Jacobson and E. M. Jacobson (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994), p. 478.

9 Bloch, *Erbschaft*, p. 19, *Heritage*, p. 5.

10 Robert Musil, *Nachlaß zu Lebzeiten* (Zurich: Humanitas Verlag, 1936).

11 Letter to Scholem, 17 October 1934, *Gesammelte Briefe* IV, p. 515; *The Correspondence of Walter Benjamin and Gershom Scholem*, p. 145.

12 The context, of course, is the post-war mainstream breakthrough of a critique of enlightenment and of notions of progress in a postmodern or 'posthistorical' condition. If historical time does not move 'forward', how then does it move? Peter Osborne gives an intelligent account and critique of many of these positions in *The Politics of Time: Modernity and Avant-Garde* (London: Verso, 1995).

13 Karl Marx, *Selected Writings*, ed. D. McLellan (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977), p. 300.

14 In Germany, this took the form of the Communist Party's notorious opposition to social democracy as 'social fascism'.

15 Bloch, *Erbschaft*, p. 153; *Heritage*, p. 138 (trans. modified).

16 Bloch, *Erbschaft*, p. 104; *Heritage*, p. 97 (trans. modified). There is a not insubstantial literature on Bloch's theory of nonsimultaneity. In English, the best accounts are Anson Rabinbach, 'Unclaimed Heritage: Ernst Bloch's *Heritage of Our Times* and the Theory of Fascism', *New German Critique* 11, 1977, pp. 5–21, and David C. Durst, 'Ernst Bloch's Theory of Nonsimultaneity', *The Germanic Review* LXXVII: 3, 2002, pp. 171–94. See also Vincent Geohegan, *Ernst Bloch* (London: Routledge, 1996), *passim*; and Tony Phelan, 'Ernst Bloch's "Golden Twenties": *Erbschaft dieser Zeit* and the Problem of Cultural History', in Keith Bullivant, ed., *Culture and Society in the Weimar Republic* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1977). In German, the most complete study is Beat Dietschy, *Gebrochene Gegenwart: Ernst Bloch, Ungleichzeitigkeit und das Geschichtsbild der Moderne* (Frankfurt am Main: Vervuert, 1988).

17 Bloch, *Erbschaft*, p. 105; *Heritage*, p. 98.
18 Bloch, *Erbschaft*, p. 106; *Heritage*, p. 99.
19 'Zeitfremd': Bloch, *Erbschaft*, p. 108; *Heritage*, p. 101 (trans. modified).
20 Bloch, *Erbschaft*, p. 123; *Heritage*, p. 114.
21 Bloch, *Erbschaft*, p. 112; *Heritage*, p. 105 (trans. modified).
22 Bloch, *Erbschaft*, p. 113; *Heritage*, p. 106 (trans. modified).
23 Bloch, *Erbschaft*, pp. 116–17; *Heritage*, p. 108 (trans. modified).
24 Bloch, *Erbschaft*, p. 113; *Heritage*, p. 106 (trans. modified).
25 Bloch, *Erbschaft*, p. 116; *Heritage*, p. 108 (trans. modified).
26 Preface to *A Critique of Political Economy* (1859), in Marx, *Selected Writings*, p. 389.
27 Bloch, *Erbschaft*, p. 114; *Heritage*, p. 106; Karl Marx, *A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy* (London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1971), p. 215. See also Ernest Mandel, 'Uneven Development', in Tom Bottomore, ed., *A Dictionary of Marxist Thought* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1983), pp. 502–3.
28 Bloch, *Erbschaft*, p. 114; *Heritage*, p. 106.
29 The only relatively complete account of Pinder's life and work is Marlite Halbertsma, *Wilhelm Pinder und die deutsche Kunstgeschichte* (Worms: Wernersche Verlagsgesellschaft, 1992). See also Halbertsma's shorter essay in Heinrich Dilly, ed., *Altmeister moderner Kunstgeschichte* (Berlin: Reimer, 1990), pp. 235–48; Robert Suckale, 'Wilhelm Pinder und die deutsche Kunstwissenschaft nach 1945', *Kritische Berichte* XIV:4, 1986, pp. 5–17; Klaus-Heinrich Meyer's response to Suckale in *Kritische Berichte* XV:1, 1987, pp. 41–48; and Hans Belting, 'Stil als Erlösung: Das Erbe Wilhelm Pinders in der deutschen Kunstgeschichte', *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, 2 September 1987. On the German history of art under national socialism, see Heinrich Dilly, *Deutsche Kunsthistoriker, 1933–1945* (Munich: Deutscher Kunstverlag, 1988).
30 Wilhelm Pinder, 'Kunstgeschichte nach Generationen', in Willy Schuster, ed., *Zwischen Philosophie und Kunst: Johannes Volkelt zum 100. Lehrsemester* (Leipzig: Pfeiffer, 1926), pp. 1–16.
31 Pinder, 'Kunstgeschichte nach Generationen', p. 4.
32 Pinder, 'Kunstgeschichte nach Generationen', p. 4.
33 Pinder, *Das Problem der Generation in der Kunstgeschichte Europas* (Berlin: Frankfurter Verlags-Anstalt, 1926), p. 15, from the section 'Die "Ungleichzeitigkeit" des Gleichzeitigen', pp. 11–22.
34 Pinder, *Das Problem der Generation*, p. 39.
35 Pinder, *Das Problem der Generation*, p. 148; Pinder, 'Kunstgeschichte nach Generationen', p. 11.
36 Pinder, *Das Problem der Generation*, pp. 50, 25.
37 Bloch, *Das Materialismusproblem, seine Geschichte und Substanz*, *Werkausgabe* VII (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1985), pp. 470–79, here p. 475.
38 Pinder, *Das Problem der Generation*, p. 98.
39 Pinder, *Das Problem der Generation*, pp. 13–14.
40 Bloch, *Erbschaft*, pp. 68–69; *Heritage*, p. 62 (trans. modified).
41 Bloch, *Erbschaft*, p. 122; *Heritage*, p. 113 (trans. modified); Pinder, *Das Problem der Generation*, p. 12.
42 See Ernst Bloch, 'Kritische Erörterungen über Rickert', in *Tendenz-Latenz-Utopie*, *Werkausgabe* X (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1978), pp. 68–72, esp. pp. 70–71. On the flurry of discussions of the problem of generations in the history of art and literary studies at the time, see Jost Hermand, *Literaturwissenschaft und Kunstwissenschaft* (Stuttgart: Metzler, 1965), pp. 46–49. In his Basel dissertation *Gebrochene Gegenwart*, Dietschy surveys anticipations of the theory of nonsimultaneity in Bloch's previous writings as well as the larger intellectual context of Bloch's work, mentioning Pinder's *Das Problem der Generation* (pp. 129–30). From the standpoint of intellectual history, Dietschy provides a wide-ranging discussion of the 'image of history' at Bloch's time. My focus on Bloch's engagement with art-historical literature is intended to thematize how the challenge of thinking the visual provided a crucial impetus to the discussions of the critical theorists. My thanks to David Durst for bringing Dietschy's work to my attention.
43 Karl Mannheim, 'Das Problem der Generationen', *Kölner Vierteljahrshefte für Soziologie* VII:ii, 1928, pp. 157–85, and VII: iii (1928): 309–30; trans. as 'The Problem of Generations', in Mannheim, *Essays on the Sociology of Knowledge*, ed. P. Kecskemeti (New York: Oxford University Press, 1952), here p. 285. The literature on the 'problem of generations'

is also discussed in Helmuth Plessner, 'Nachwort zum Generationsproblem', *Diesseits der Utopie* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1974), pp. 74–86; and Hans Jaeger, 'Generationen in der Geschichte: Überlegungen zu einer umstrittenen Konzeption', *Geschichte und Gesellschaft* III, 1977, pp. 429–52.

44 Karl Mannheim, 'Das konservative Denken: Soziologische Beiträge zum Werden des politisch-historischen Denkens in Deutschland', *Archiv für Sozialwissenschaft und Sozialpolitik* LVII: i, 1927, pp. 68–142, and LVII:ii 1927, pp. 470–95; trans. in K. H. Wolff, ed., *From Karl Mannheim* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1971), here pp. 171–74.

45 Volker Breidecker, ed., *Siegfried Kracauer–Erwin Panofsky: Briefwechsel* (Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 1996), p. 73 (letter of 16 March 1964).

46 Mannheim, 'The Problem of Generations'; Franz Landsberger, 'Das Generationsproblem in der Kunstgeschichte', *Kritische Berichte* I, 1927/28, pp. 33–37.

47 Georg Simmel, 'Das Problem der historischen Zeit' (1916), reprinted in Simmel, *Brücke und Tür* (Stuttgart: Koehler, 1957), pp. 43–58.

48 Simmel, 'Das Problem der historischen Zeit', pp. 45–46. That Simmel's essay on historical time emerged from his consideration of *art*-historical problems can be inferred from the fact that it was first reprinted in Simmel's posthumously published collection of writings on art, *Zur Philosophie der Kunst*, ed. Gertrud Simmel (Potsdam: Kiepenheuer, 1922).

49 Erwin Panofsky, 'Über die Reihenfolge der vier Meister von Reims', *Jahrbuch für Kunstwissenschaft*, 1927, pp. 55–82; 'Zum Problem der historischen Zeit', in Panofsky, *Aufsätze zu Grundfragen der Kunstwissenschaften*, ed. Hariolf Oberer and Egon Verheyen (Berlin: Volker Spiess, 1985), pp. 77–83.

50 'Reims becomes a question of the "problem of generations," or rather of what we might term the "problem of historical time" – for the "problem of generations" is here only a special case, and not even the most important.' Panofsky, 'Zum Problem der historischen Zeit', p. 77. Panofsky does not refer to Pinder by name; he refers to Simmel's essay on pp. 79 and 83, n. 3. Silvia Feretti discusses the relation of Panofsky's essay to Simmel's (but not Pinder's work) in *Cassirer, Panofsky, and Warburg: Symbol, Art, and History*, trans. Richard Pierce (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1989), pp. 213–17.

51 Panofsky, 'Zum Problem der historischen Zeit', p. 77.

52 'The stars of one's birth are clearly a force of nature. . . . It is not enough to point to the similarity of external conditions, a certain equivalence of experience (for example the common experience of great wars) that make those of the same age simultaneous. The miracle of the "casts" of nature [*Würfe der Natur*], the scientifically demonstrable formation of groups in the birth of decisive souls is not in this way explained. It is merely witnessed.' Pinder, 'Kunstgeschichte nach Generationen', p. 11. 'Is there any law to explain the grouping of decisive births? Yes, in this sense: that the close convergence of these births is an ever-recurring fact – a mystery, but a fact.' Pinder, 'Kunstgeschichte nach Generationen', p. 15.

53 Panofsky, 'Zum Problem der historischen Zeit', p. 80.

54 Panofsky, 'Zum Problem der historischen Zeit', p. 81.

55 Panofsky, 'Zum Problem der historischen Zeit', p. 81.

56 In any case, this is Bloch's solution. But for a Marxist critique of this 'standard' of simultaneity, see Louis Althusser and Etienne Balibar, *Reading Capital* (London: New Left Books, 1970), pp. 91–118. For a critique of Althusser's critique, see Osborne, *The Politics of Time*, pp. 23–29. Althusser, it should be noted, wrote within a different tradition of thinking about historical time, a predominantly French line of thought stretching from Bergson through the Annales school, and encompassing the well-known art-historical work of Henri Focillon and George Kubler.

57 It is a solution that has not gone unnoticed but has not been extended in the anglophone world. For the most sophisticated attempts, inspired by Bloch, to think through both experience and totality without the need to invoke a Lukácsian notion of class consciousness, see two books by Oskar Negt and Alexander Kluge: *Public Sphere and Experience: Toward an Analysis of the Bourgeois and Proletarian Public Sphere*, trans. P. Labanyi *et al.* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1993), and *Geschichte und Eigensinn* (Frankfurt am Main: Zweitausendeins, 1981).

58 Bloch, *Erbschaft*, p. 112; *Heritage*, p. 105 (trans. modified).

59 On mass housing in Weimar Germany, see Barbara Miller Lane, *Architecture and Politics in Germany*, second edition (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1985); Manfredo Tafuri, 'Sozialpolitik and the City in Weimar Germany', in *The Sphere and the Labyrinth: Avant-Gardes and Architecture from Piranesi to the 1970s*, trans. Pellegrino d'Acierno and Robert Connolly (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1987), pp. 197–263; and *Architectural Association Quarterly* XI: 1, 1979, special issue on social housing in Weimar Germany.

60 The best account of this episode is Richard Pommer, 'The Flat Roof: A Modernist Controversy in Germany', *Art Journal* XLIII: 2, 1983, pp. 158–69.

61 For one case study of modernism and the left, see Richard Pommer, 'Mies van der Rohe and the Political Ideology of the Modern Movement in Architecture', in Franz Schulze, ed., *Mies van der Rohe: Critical Essays* (New York: Museum of Modern Art, 1989). The standard text on right-wing modernism in Germany is Jeffrey Herf, *Reactionary Modernism: Technology, Culture, and Politics in Weimar and the Third Reich* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984).

62 Bloch, *Erbschaft*, p. 212; *Heritage*, p. 195 (trans. modified).

63 Bloch, *Erbschaft*, p. 213; *Heritage*, p. 196 (trans. modified).

64 Bloch, *Erbschaft*, p. 207; *Heritage*, p. 190.

65 Bloch, *Erbschaft*, p. 217; *Heritage*, p. 199.

66 Bloch, *Erbschaft*, p. 214; *Heritage*, p. 196 (trans. modified).

67 Bloch, *Erbschaft*, p. 219, *Heritage*, pp. 200–1 (trans. modified). Bloch took Giedion more seriously than this dismissal might suggest. Indeed Giedion, like many critics, pointed out the nonsimultaneity evident in historicising nineteenth- and twentieth-century architecture, seeing construction as the 'present' and the façade as the 'past.' His metaphor, however, is loosely psychoanalytical: 'Construction in the nineteenth century plays the role of the *subconscious*.' Sigfried Giedion, *Building in France, Building in Iron, Building in Ferro-Concrete*, trans. J. Duncan Berry (Santa Monica, Calif.: Getty Center for the History of Art and the Humanities, 1995), p. 87. Giedion was, however, of little use to Bloch, who did not accept technology as in itself liberating (hence his negative reference to Giedion's views as 'social democratic'). The text(s) in which Bloch works through his position with regard to craft and technology is, of course, *Der Geist der Utopie*. In particular, one should compare the first and second editions (1918 and 1923, respectively). The first edition was written within the famework of pre-war debates on architecture and the applied arts; the second in battle with postwar arguments. Bloch's argument remains by and large the same, but the antagonist had evolved. In architectural terms, he does battle in the first edition with architectural realism or '*Sachlichkeit*', in the second edition with an emerging architectural modernism or '*Neue Sachlichkeit*'.

68 The reference to Scharoun is clear in another passage, from a section called 'The Ship House': 'From this too we learn to freeze. Inside and out the wall is bare. But in return we see the inside open, the outside breaks through. . . . Even this house no longer pretends to take root here. Straps run round the ledges, made of blue steel, shining at night. . . . Deprivation forces people into large blocks, but the open age blows on the die and changes its shape. Low doors no longer lead into the safe house, but on board. Curves form a ship's bow, the queues pull bands around the hull, even the flat roof . . . is . . . more like a sundeck. Steps on the outside, riveted circular windows strengthen the travelling impression: the whole house becomes a ship.' Bloch, *Erbschaft*, p. 220; *Heritage*, p. 210. Scharoun's apartment block for bachelors and young married couples on the Hohenzollerndamm – close to the underground line Bloch would have used traveling between his home in the Friedenau section and the centre of Berlin – had a prominently placed band that was illuminated at night at the 'curved bow'; and Scharoun's most publicised building, in Berlin-Siemensstadt, was famously dubbed the 'battleship' or 'armoured cruiser' (*Panzerkreuzer*) and matches Bloch's description of circular windows and outside stairways quite precisely. See J. Christoph Bürkle, Hans Scharoun (Zurich: Artemis, 1993), pp. 74–79; and Annemarie Jaeggi, 'Siemensstadt', in *Vier Berliner Siedlungen der Weimarer Republik* (Berlin: Bauhaus-Archiv, 1985), pp. 163–64.

69 And in exploring, from a revolutionary standpoint, the philosophical potential of the romantic critique of modernity, he is closely associated with the Lukács of *History and Class Consciousness*.

70 Wilhelm Pinder, 'Diskusionsrede', in *Werkbundfragen: Reden der Münchener Tagung, Flugschrift der 'Form'* 1 (Berlin: Hermann Reckendorf, 1928), p. 21.

71 Pinder, 'Diskusionsrede', p. 27. Pinder mentions 'a Dutch "radical" voice' that had dismissed 'M[onumentale]-Kunst' as 'completely finished off'. He is clearly referring to Mart Stam, 'M-Kunst', *i10*, no. 1–2, 1927, pp. 41–43.

72 See, from a growing literature, Winfried Nerdinger, ed., *Bauhaus-Moderne im Nationalsozialismus: Zwischen Anbiederung und Verfolgung* (Munich: Prestel, 1993); Hartmut Frank, ed., *Faschistische Architekturen: Planen und Bauen in Europa, 1930 bis 1945* (Hamburg: Christians, 1985); Matthias Schirren, 'Was ist "deutsche" Baukunst? Zur Auseinandersetzung um das Neue Bauen 1933/34', in *Bauhaus Berlin*, ed. Peter Hahn (Berlin: Bauhaus-Archiv, 1985), pp. 253–85; *Moderne Architektur in Deutschland 1900 bis 2000: Macht und Monument*, exh. cat. (Frankfurt am Main: Deutsches Architektur-Museum, 1998).

73 Wilhelm Pinder, 'Die bildende Kunst im neuen deutschen Staat', in *Reden aus der Zeit* (Leipzig: E. A. Seeman, 1934), p. 30. Pinder's text is discussed in Stefan Germer, 'Die italienische Hoffnung: Rolle und Rezeption der rationalistischen Architektur in Deutschland', in Stefan Germer and Achim Preiß, eds, *Giuseppe Terragni, 1904–1943* (Munich: Klinckhardt and Biermann, 1991), pp. 73–103, esp. 76–77.

74 Pinder, 'Die bildende Kunst im neuen deutschen Staat', p. 34.

75 Pinder, 'Die bildende Kunst im neuen deutschen Staat', p. 35.

76 Pinder, 'Die bildende Kunst im neuen deutschen Staat', pp. 46–47.

77 Pinder, 'Die bildende Kunst im neuen deutschen Staat', p. 52.

78 Pinder, 'Die bildende Kunst im neuen deutschen Staat', p. 50.

79 Pinder, 'Die bildende Kunst im neuen deutschen Staat', p. 29.

80 Pinder, 'Die bildende Kunst im neuen deutschen Staat', p. 67.

81 Hugo Häring, 'Für Wiedererweckung einer deutschen Baukultur', typescript, reprinted in Schirren, 'Was ist "deutsche" Baukunst?' pp. 277–78. Stefan Germer raises the possibility that Pinder's Munich address was an important source for Häring's formulations: Germer, 'Die italienische Hoffnung', p. 85. Häring mentions Pinder on pp. 276–77.

82 One prominent statement was Josef Strzygowski, *Die Krisis der Geisteswissenschaften vorgeführt am Beispiele der Forschung über bildende Kunst* (Vienna: Schroll, 1923).

83 After the early years of national socialism, Pinder (never, it seems, a party member) did not remain close to the regime. This seems to be the result of both the unpopularity of his views in government and his own disenchantment with the party. See Halbertsma, *Wilhelm Pinder und die deutsche Kunstgeschichte*, pp. 129–63.

84 Halbertsma, *Wilhelm Pinder und die deutsche Kunstgeschichte*, p. 61. One should not, however, underestimate the impact of Pinder's book. Perhaps the most fruitful use of it appears in Henri Focillon, *The Life of Forms in Art* of 1934. In his chapter 'Forms in the Realm of Time', Focillon elegantly absorbs Pinder's argument about nonsimultaneity and the nature of historical time, turning it from a theory that required a philosophical base (for Pinder, that base was a form of biological vitalism) into reflections that required none. *The Life of Forms in Art*, trans. Charles Beecher Hogan and George Kubler (New York: Zone Books, 1992), pp. 17–56; see also Focillon, *The Art of the West* I: *Romanesque Art*, trans. Donald King (1938; Oxford: Phaidon, 1963), pp. 9–10. Focillon also cleverly adjusts the words of Marx from the *Eighteenth Brumaire*. Compare the epigraph above with Focillon's comfortably idealist formulation that turns Marx's materialist base into a musical superstructure: 'Man works on himself. But he does not, it is true, rid himself of the age-old deposits laid down by time, and they are something that must be accounted for. What they constitute is a tonality, rather than an armature or a foundation' (p. 142). That Focillon was knowingly working with Pinder's work is clear from his student Georg Kubler's references to Pinder in *The Shape of Time: Remarks on the History of Things* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1962), p. 105, n. 9.

85 Younger figures did not. Besides Mannheim, Bloch's younger colleagues showed little interest in the issue of generations and their historical meaning. Adorno refers to the problem of generations but does not find the issue worth taking up: Adorno, *Ästhetische Theorie*, *Gesammelte Schriften* VII (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1971-86), p. 59. Benjamin does not mention the debate; he did, however, read Simmel's 'Problem der historischen Zeit', and he was disappointed: 'Some time ago I read Simmel's *Das Problem der historischen Zeit*, an extremely wretched concoction that goes through contortions of reasoning, incomprehensibly uttering the silliest things.' Letter to Scholem, *c.*23 December 1917, in Benjamin, *Gesammelte Briefe* I, p. 409; *The Correspondence of Walter Benjamin*, p. 106. Only Siegfried Kracauer (born 1889), showed interest. See his letter to Bloch of 7 February 1935 in Bloch, *Briefe* I, p. 385. In his old age, Kracauer discussed nonsimultaneity at length, with reference to Marx, Henri Focillon's *Life of Forms* and Kubler's *The Shape of Time*: Kracauer, *History: The Last Things Before the Last* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1969), chapter six. See also his letters to Bloch of 17 June 1963 and an undated letter from approximately 1965 in Bloch, *Briefe* I, pp. 398–403; and his correspondence with Panofsky from the same period in Breidecker, ed., *Siegfried Kracauer–Erwin Panofsky: Briefwechsel*, pp. 67–74.

86 Pinder, 'Die bildende Kunst im neuen deutschen Staat', p. 49.

87 Bloch, *Erbschaft dieser Zeit*, first edition (Zurich: Oprecht & Helbling, 1935), pp. 94–95. The section with the title 'Instead Brown Theft' ('*Statt dessen brauner Diebstahl*') does not appear in the 1962 edition that is reprinted in the *Werkausgabe*. Similar material is discussed instead in a section called 'Inventory of Revoltionary Appearance' ('*Inventar des revolutionären Scheins*'), which bears the date 1933. Bloch, *Erbschaft*, pp. 70–75; *Heritage*, pp. 64–69.

88 'Jeder Zustand, ja jeder Augenblick ist von unendlichem Wert, denn er ist der Repräsentant einer ganzen Ewigkeit': Johann Peter Eckermann, *Gespräche mit Goethe*, in Goethe, *Gedenkausgabe* XXIV (Zurich: Artemis, 1949), p. 67.

89 Fritz Strich, *Deutsche Klassik und Romantik, oder Vollendung und Unendlichkeit*, third edition (Munich: C. H. Beck, 1928), pp. 66–67.

90 Strich, *Deutsche Klassik und Romantik*, p. 69.

91 Strich, *Deutsche Klassik und Romantik*, p. 379.

92 Strich, *Deutsche Klassik und Romantik*, p. 380. Dolf Sternberger discusses Bloch's *Das Prinzip Hoffnung* and Heine's notion of a 'Third Reich' in *Heinrich Heine und die Abschaffung der Sünde* (Hamburg: Claassen, 1972), pp. 79–81. Heine refers to the 'thousand-year Reich' of romanticism in a letter to Karl August Varnhagen von Ense; see William Rose, *Heinrich Heine: Two Studies of His Thought and Feeling* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1956), p. 63.

93 Walter Benjamin, 'Theses on the Philosophy of History', in Benjamin, *Illuminations*, trans. Harry Zohn (New York: Schocken, 1969), p. 261. Bloch's and Benjamin's senses of history are intelligently discussed in Hans-Ernst Schiller, 'Jetztzeit und Entwicklung: Geschichte bei Ernst Bloch und Walter Benjamin', in Schiller, *Bloch-Konstellationen: Utopien der Philosophie* (Lüneburg: zu Klampen, 1991), pp. 25–50.

94 Ernst Bloch, *Geist der Utopie (Zweite Fassung [1923])*, *Werkausgabe* III (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1985), p. 237.

95 Bloch, *Geist der Utopie*, p. 254.

96 Bloch, *Geist der Utopie*, p. 253.

97 Arno Münster, ed., *Tagträume vom aufrechten Gang: Sechs Interviews mit Ernst Bloch* (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1977), p. 167.

98 Walter Benjamin, *Das Passagen-Werk*, *Gesammelte Schriften* V (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1972–89), p. 490–91 [K 1, 2].

99 In many cases, the early texts were not published at the time. Where they were, inspection of the original texts shows that considerable changes and elaborations were made (compare 'Amusement Co., Grauen, Drittes Reich', dated September 1930 in Bloch, *Erbschaft*, pp. 61–67, with the original publication as 'Zum "Dritten Reich"' in the *Frankfurter Zeitung*, 22 November 1930, reprinted in Bloch, *Fabelnd denken: Essayistische Prosa aus der 'Frankfurter Zeitung'*, ed. Gerd Ueding (Tübingen: Klöpfer & Meyer, 1997), pp. 109–14. For a discussion of the problem of text-dating that has plagued the reception of Bloch's work and a convincing argument that no bad faith on the author's part is involved, see Oskar Negt, 'Ernst Bloch:

The German Philosopher of the October Revolution', *New German Critique* 4, 1975, pp. 3–16.

100 Letter to Walter Benjamin, 18 December 1934, in Bloch, *Briefe* II, pp. 658–69. For speculation on the identity of this 'second book', see the comments of Burghart Schmidt, editor of Bloch's correspondence with Benjamin, in *Briefe* II, pp. 660–61.

Mimesis

1 Georg Lukács, *History and Class Consciousness*, trans. A. Bostock (London: Merlin Press, 1971), p. 153.

2 The 'new middle class' of salaried employees and their entertainment are a recurring theme of Kracauer's feuilleton articles as well as of his 1930 *Die Angestellten: Aus dem neuesten Deutschland* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1971), now translated by Quintin Hoare as *The Salaried Masses: Duty and Distraction in Weimar Germany* (London: Verso, 1998).

3 Siegfried Kracauer, 'Das Ornament der Masse', in *Das Ornament der Masse: Essays* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1977), p. 50; 'The Mass Ornament', in *The Mass Ornament: Weimar Essays*, ed. and trans. Thomas Y. Levin (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1995), p. 75 (trans. modified).

4 Gertrud Koch, *Kracauer zur Einführung* (Hamburg: Junius, 1996), p. 42.

5 The literature on Kracauer is by now extensive. For general accounts, see Inka Mülder, *Siegfried Kracauer – Grenzgänger zwischen Theorie und Literatur: Seine frühen Schriften, 1913–1933* (Stuttgart: Metzler, 1985); Enzo Traverso, *Siegfried Kracauer: Itinéraire d'un intellectuel nomade* (Paris: Editions la découverte, 1994); Gertrud Koch, *Siegfried Kracauer: An Introduction*, trans. J. Gaines (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000); and Momme Brodersen, *Siegfried Kracauer* (Reinbek: Rowohlt, 2001). On Kracauer's architectural and art-historical background, see I. Belke and I. Renz, eds, *Siegfried Kracauer, 1889–1966* (*Marbacher Magazin* 47 [1988]), pp. 7–30; Gerwin Zohlen, 'Schmugglerpfad: Siegfried Kracauer, Architekt und Schriftsteller', in Michael Kessler and Thomas Y. Leven, eds, *Siegfried Kracauer: Neue Interpretationen* (Tübingen: Stauffenburg, 1990), pp. 324–31; Tillmann Heß, 'Zur Architektur in Kracauers Stadtbildern', in Andreas Volk, ed., *Siegfried Kracauer: Zum Werk des Romanciers, Feuilletonisten, Architekten, Filmwissenschaftlers und Soziologen* (Zurich: Seismo, 1996), pp. 111–30; and Frederic J. Schwartz, 'Form Follows Fetish: Adolf Behne and the Problem of *Sachlichkeit*', *Oxford Art Journal* XXI: 2, 1998, pp. 57–61.

6 On Simmel's involvement with the so-called 'Berlin Club', which included Wölfflin, Henry van de Velde, Alfred Lichtwark, Max Klinger and Graf Harry Kessler, see the letters from Simmel to Stefan George in Heinz-Jürgen Dahme and Otthein Rammstedt, eds, *Georg Simmel und die Moderne: Neue Interpretationen und Materialien* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1984), pp. 434–37, and Harry Liebersohn, *Fate and Utopia in German Sociology, 1870–1923* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1988), pp. 147–49. I discuss the relation of Simmel's work to the art historiography and design theory of the period in *The Werkbund: Design Theory and Mass Culture Before the First World War* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1996), chapter one.

7 Heinrich Wölfflin, 'Prolegomena zu einer Psychologie der Architektur' (1886), in *Kleine Schriften*, ed. J. Gantner (Basel: Schwabe, 1946), p. 46.

8 Alois Riegl, *Spätrömische Kunstindustie* (1901), second edition (Vienna: Österreichische Staatsdruckerei, 1927), p. 19.

9 Simmel's most important contributions to the applied arts and the issue of ornament were published in 1908, when Kracauer was Simmel's student: 'Das Problem des Stiles', *Dekorative Kunst* XI: 7 1908, pp. 307–16; and 'Psychologie des Schmuckes', *Der Morgen* II: 15, 1908, pp. 454–59. In a diary entry of 29 October 1907, Kracauer records hearing the former as a lecture. Belke and Renz, eds, *Siegfried Kracauer, 1889–1966*, pp. 11–12.

10 Kracauer, 'Ornament der Masse', p. 51; 'Mass Ornament', p. 76 (trans. modified).

11 Kracauer, 'Ornament der Masse', p. 52; 'Mass Ornament', p. 77.

12 Kracauer, 'Ornament der Masse', p. 51; 'Mass Ornament', p. 76.

13 Kracauer, 'Ornament der Masse', p. 51; 'Mass Ornament', p. 76.
14 Kracauer, 'Ornament der Masse', pp. 52, 53; 'Mass Ornament', pp. 77, 78 (trans. modified).
15 For example, in his 'Cult of Distraction', discussed in chapter two, above.
16 Kracauer, 'Ornament der Masse', p. 57; 'Mass Ornament', p. 81.
17 Brodersen, *Siegfried Kracauer*, pp. 54–55.
18 Karl Heussi, *Die Krisis des Historismus* (Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr [Paul Siebeck], 1932), pp. 27–28.
19 Georg G. Iggers, *The German Conception of History: The National Tradition of Historical Thought from Herder to the Present*, revised edition (Middletown, Conn.: Wesleyan University Press, 1983), p. 242.
20 Christopher S. Wood, ed., *The Vienna School Reader: Politics and Art Historical Method in the 1930s* (New York: Zone Books, 2000), here Wood's introduction, p. 23. The reading of a crisis in the study of art outlined here is my only quibble with Wood's indispensable introduction to this volume.
21 Walter Passarge, *Die Philosophie der Kunstgeschichte in der Gegenwart* (Berlin: Junker und Dünnhaupt, 1930).
22 Paul Frankl, *Das System der Kunstwissenschaft* (Brünn and Leipzig: Rohrer, 1938; reprinted Berlin: Gebr. Mann, 1998).
23 In 'History and Natural Science', his Strassburg inaugural speech of 1894. See Iggers, *The German Conception of History*, pp. 147–52.
24 Erwin Panofsky, 'Der Begriff des Kunstwollens' (1920), in Panofsky, *Aufsätze zu Grundfragen der Kunstwissenschaft*, ed. H. Oberer and E. Verheyen (Berlin: Spiess, 1985), pp. 29–43; 'The Concept of Artistic Volition', trans. K. J. Northcott and J. Snyder, *Critical Inquiry* VIII, 1981, pp. 17–33. On this essay, see Michael Ann Holly, *Panofsky and the Foundations of Art History* (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1984), chapter three.
25 Hans-Georg Gadamer discusses the matter with customary clarity: 'History of problems would be truly history only if it acknowledged the identity of the problem as a pure abstraction and permitted itself a transformation into questioning. There is no such thing, in fact, as a point outside history from which the identity of a problem can be conceived within the vicissitudes of the various attempts to solve it. . . . The problem that we recognise is not in fact simply the same . . . We can regard it as the same only because of our historical shortsightedness. The standpoint that is beyond any standpoint, a standpoint from which we could conceive its true identity, is a pure illusion. . . . The history of problems in neokantianism is a bastard of historicism.' *Truth and Method* (New York: Crossroad, 1986), pp. 338–40. See also Lorenz Dittmann's comments in his uncharitable but invaluable analysis of Sedlmayr in *Stil, Symbol, Struktur: Studien zu Kategorien der Kunstgeschichte* (Munich: Wilhelm Fink, 1967), p. 146.
26 Wilhelm Pinder, *Das Problem der Generation in der Kunstgeschichte Europas* (Berlin: Frankfurter Verlags-Anstalt, 1926), discussed in chapter three, above.
27 Hans Sedlmayr, 'Die Quintessenz der Lehren Riegls', in Alois Riegl, *Gesammelte Aufsätze*, ed. K. J. Swoboda (Augsburg and Vienna: Benno Filser, 1927), p. xxxi; 'The Quintessence of Riegl's Thought', trans. M. Rampley, in Richard Woodfield, ed., *Framing Formalism: Riegl's Work* (Amsterdam: G+B Arts International, 2001), p. 27.
28 Sedlmayr, 'Quintessenz', p. xvii; 'Quintessence', p. 15.
29 Sedlmayr, 'Quintessenz', p. xviii; 'Quintessence', p. 16.
30 Sedlmayr, 'Quintessenz', p. xviii; 'Quintessence', p. 17 (trans. modified).
31 Sedlmayr, 'Quintessenz', p. xxiv; 'Quintessence', p. 21 (trans. modified).
32 'It is not customary to engage in polemics against a book review. If I here take issue with S[edlmayr]'s observations on the work about Carlo Fontana . . . there are particular reasons. S. does not review the Fontana book. Instead he makes his own contribution to the matter. [Paragraph] Since this is a critique of a critique, I will not here present what S. was supposed to have done – a review of Coudenhove-Erthal's book. . . .' Rudolf Wittkower, 'Zu Hans Sedlmayrs Besprechung von E. Coudenhove-Erthal: *Carlo Fontana*', *Kritische Berichte* III/IV, 1930/1932, p. 142.
33 Hans Sedlmayr, review of Karl Tolnai, *Die Zeichnungen Pieter Bruegels* (1925), *Kritische Berichte* I/II, 1927/1928, p. 24. Sedlmayr's characterisation of this sort of reaction to scientific pursuits quotes Lucien Lévy-Bruhl.

34 Sedlmayr, review of Tolnai, *Die Zeichnungen Pieter Bruegels*, p. 25. It is worth pointing out that Sedlmayr and Otto Pächt were working in close tandem – à la Picasso and Braque – at this time. At precisely the same time, Pächt criticised Max J. Friedländer's *Dierick Bouts – Joos van Gent* as follows: 'F[riedländer] . . . forgets that even intuitive and empirical conslusions have scientific value when they are integrated into a conceptual base.' *Kritische Berichte* I/II, 1927/1929, p. 37.

35 Sedlmayr, review of Tolnai, *Die Zeichnungen Pieter Bruegels*, p. 27.

36 Sedlmayr, review of Tolnai, *Die Zeichnungen Pieter Bruegels*, p. 27. The term 'concept formation' refers to Heinrich Rickert's neo-Kantian critique of the natural sciences as a model for the human sciences: *Die Grenzen der naturwissenschaftlichen Begriffsbildung* (Freiburg, 1896).

37 Sedlmayr, review of Tolnai, *Die Zeichnungen Pieter Bruegels*, p. 29.

38 Sedlmayr, review of Tolnai, *Die Zeichnungen Pieter Bruegels*, p. 27.

39 Sedlmayr, review of Tolnai, *Die Zeichnungen Pieter Bruegels*, p. 25.

40 Sedlmayr, review of Tolnai, *Die Zeichnungen Pieter Bruegels*, p. 28.

41 'Unberechenbarkeit . . . ist das Privileg des Verrückten.' Quoted in Iggers, *The German Idea of History*, p. 163.

42 Hans Sedlmayr, 'Zu einer strengen Kunstwissenschaft', *Kunstwissenschaftliche Forschung* I, 1930/31; trans. in Wood, ed., *The Vienna School Reader* as 'Toward a Rigorous Study of Art.' Where I modify Mia Fineman's excellent translation, I will also cite the original text as reprinted in Sedlmayr, *Kunst und Wahrheit: Zur Theorie und Methode der Kunstgeschichte* (Hamburg: Rowohlt, 1958).

43 Edmund Husserl, 'Philosophie als strenge Wissenschaft', *Logos* I, 1911, pp. 289–341.

44 Hans Sedlmayr, *Die Architektur Borrominis* (Berlin: Frankfurter Verlags-Anstalt, 1930), p. 12.

45 Hans Sedlmayr, 'Fischer von Erlach: Gegenwärtige Erkenntnislage', *Kritische Berichte* I/II, 1927/1929, pp. 118. Sedlmayr has adopted these terms from the three studies by Johannes von Allesch in *Psychologische Forschung* from the 1920s.

46 Sedlmayr, 'Zu einer strengen Kunstwissenschaft', pp. 43–44; 'Toward a Rigorous Study of Art', p. 144.

47 'A consideration of "style" does not investigate the artwork in terms of the totality of its qualities, of the connectedness and function of its so-called "parts", of the concrete gestalt, but rather in terms of the qualities that are "*characteristic of*" a group of images. The groups that are thus investigated are defined by *common origin*, be it from an "epoch", a "people" ["*Volk*" *oder* "*Stamm*"], a "geographical area" ["*Landschaft*"], a "generation", an "individual", etc. . . . In terms of form one can say that the interest of a history of styles is *primarily* a classificatory one, its point of view . . . strictly speaking a non-artistic one.' Hans Sedlmayr, 'Zum Begriff der "Strukturanalyse"', *Kritische Berichte* III/IV, 1930/1932, p. 158.

48 Sedlmayr, 'Toward a Rigorous Study of Art', p. 155.

49 See here Mitchell G. Ash, *Gestalt Psychology in German Culture, 1890–1967: Holism and the Quest for Objectivity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), esp. chapter five.

50 On *Psychologische Forschung*, see Ash, *Gestalt Psychology in German Culture*, pp. 216–18.

51 Hans Sedlmayr, 'Gestaltetes Sehen', *Belvedere* VIII, 1925, p. 65. Sedlmayr's source seems to be Ernst von Aster's review of Koffka's long essay (published in the *Annalen der Philosophie* III). See 'Referate', *Psychologische Forschung* V, 1924, p. 360.

52 Sedlmayr, 'Toward a Rigorous Study of Art', p. 144.

53 Sedlmayr, 'Toward a Rigorous Study of Art', p. 145.

54 Sedlmayr, 'Toward a Rigorous Study of Art', pp. 147 48.

55 Sedlmayr, 'Zu einer strengen Kunstwissenschaft', p. 53; 'Toward a Rigorous Study of Art', p. 155 (trans. modified).

56 Sedlmayr, 'Toward a Rigorous Study of Art', p. 165.

57 Hans Sedlmayr, review of G. J. von Allesch, *Die ästhetische Erscheinungsweise der Farben* (1925), in *Kritische Berichte* III/IV, 1930/1932, p. 214.

58 Sedlmayr, review of von Allesch, *Die ästhetische Erscheinungsweise der Farben*, p. 215.

59 Hans Sedlmayr, *Die Architektur Borrominis* (Berlin: Frankfurter Verlags-Anstalt, 1930), p. 9.

60 Sedlmayr, *Die Architektur Borrominis*, p. 28.

61 Sedlmayr, *Die Architektur Borrominis*, p. 31.

62 Other scholars of Borromini have, it must be said, judged it harshly. An early critique of both the methodology and its results can be found in Eberhard Hempel, 'Ist "eine strenge Kunstwissenschaft" möglich?', *Zeitschrift für Kunstgeschichte* III, 1934, pp. 155–63. Anthony Blunt calls the book 'ingenious but perverse' (but relates it, inaccurately and inexplicably, to Freudian psychoanalysis): Blunt, *Borromini* (London: Allen Lane, 1979), p. 221. Most recent scholarship simply ignores Sedlmayr's book; works that do cite it find its conclusions unfounded and unproductive. See Martin Raspe, *Das Architektursystem Borrominis* (Munich: Deutscher Kunstverlag, 1994), esp. p. 14.

63 See esp. Sedlmayr, *Die Architektur Borrominis*, pp. 92–97.

64 Sedlmayr, *Die Architektur Borrominis*, p. 85.

65 Sedlmayr, *Die Architektur Borrominis*, pp. 117–18.

66 Sedlmayr, *Die Architektur Borrominis*, p. 119.

67 Sedlmayr, *Die Architektur Borrominis*, pp. 119–20.

68 Ernst Kretschmer, *Physique and Character*, trans. W. J. H. Sprott (London: Kegan Paul, 1925); Sedlmayr cites the seventh German edition: *Körperbau und Charakter* (1928).

69 Sedlmayr, *Die Architektur Borrominis*, p. 122.

70 Sedlmayr, *Die Architektur Borrominis*, p. 122.

71 Sedlmayr, *Die Architektur Borrominis*, p. 128.

72 Sedlmayr, *Die Architektur Borrominis*, p. 135.

73 Sedlmayr, *Die Architektur Borrominis*, p. 162.

74 On Ehrenfels and his position regarding the source of gestalt order, see Anne Harrington, *Reenchanted Science: Holism in German Culture from Wilhelm II to Hitler* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996), pp. 108–11; for Köhler's rejection of this position, see his *Gestalt Psychology* (1947; New York: Mentor, n. d.), p. 94.

75 Benjamin had read the volume of Riegl's *Gesammelte Aufsätze* containing Sedlmayr's 'The Quintessence of Riegl's Theories': see Walter Benjamin, *Gesammelte Briefe* IV, ed. Christoph Gödde and Henri Lonitz (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1995–2000), p. 262. On the central importance of the work of Riegl for Benjamin, see Wolfgang Kemp, 'Fernbilder: Walter Benjamin und die Kunstwissenschaft', in Burkhardt Lindner, ed., *Walter Benjamin in Kontext*, second edition (Königstein: Athenäum, 1985); Thomas Y. Levin, 'Walter Benjamin and the Theory of Art History', *October* 47, Winter 1988, 77–83; and Giles Peaker, 'Works that Have Lasted: Walter Benjamin Reading Alois Riegl', in R. Woodfield, ed., *Framing Formalism: Riegl's Work* (Amsterdam: G+B Arts International, 2001).

76 Sedlmayr, 'Toward a Rigorous Study of Art', pp. 155–56.

77 G. W. Leibniz, *Philosophical Texts*, trans. R. Francks and R. S. Woolhouse (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), pp. 268–69, 277.

78 Sedlmayr, 'Toward a Rigorous Study of Art', p. 155.

79 Walter Benjamin, 'Rigorous Study of Art: On the First Volume of *Kunstwissenschaftliche Forschungen*', trans. T. Y. Levin, in Wood, ed., *The Vienna School Reader*, p. 443.

80 'I am very pleased with your review [of the *Kunstwissenschaftliche Forschungen*]; I can hardly find the right words to say how clear I find the sympathy for the goals of the interpretation and for the object itself. I also agree fully with the approach that you chose to the programme of our efforts; and I am certain that Sedlmayr will see important points in your objections. I have myself discussed with him perspectives not involving gestalt theory; he will not ignore these in his further work.' Letter of Carl Linfert to Walter Benjamin, December 1932, reprinted in Walter Benjamin, *Gesammelte Schriften* III, ed. R. Tiedemann and H. Schweppenhäuser (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1972–89), pp. 653–54.

81 Hugo von Hofmannsthal, 'Der Brief des Lord Chandos', *Gesammelte Werke* II (Berlin: Fischer, 1924), pp. 175–76.

82 Obviously not from nowhere: Imbriani's *La quinta promotrice* of 1868 is discussed by Benedetto Croce in a work translated by Sedlmayr's teacher, Julius von Schlosser: Benedetto Croce, *Kleine Schriften zur Ästhetik* I (Tübingen: Mohr, 1929), p. 249.

83 Sedlmayr, 'Bruegel's *Macchia*', trans. in Wood, ed., *The Vienna School Reader*, p. 323. Sdelmayr himself referred to this essay as his *Habilitation*, the second dissertation required at German-speaking universities for a teaching position. But as Hans H. Aurenhammer has just established, this is not, strictly speaking, correct. Sedlmayr's *Habilitation* was in fact the study 'Das erste

mittelalterliche Architektursystem', his second contribution to *Kunstwissenschaftliche Forschunger* II, 1933 – though, on the advice of Schlosser, he submitted his Bruegel essay along with his *Habilitation* application. Aurenhammer, 'Hans Sedlmayr und die Kunstgeschichte an der Universität Wien, 1938–1945', *Kunt und Politik: Jahrbuch der Guernica-Gesellschaft* V, 2003, p. 189, n. 90.

84 Sedlmayr, 'Bruegel's *Macchia*', p. 324.
85 Sedlmayr, 'Bruegel's *Macchia*', p. 323.
86 Sedlmayr, 'Bruegel's *Macchia*', p. 324.
87 Sedlmayr, 'Bruegel's *Macchia*', p. 325.
88 Sedlmayr, 'Bruegel's *Macchia*', p. 330.
89 Sedlmayr, 'Bruegel's *Macchia*', pp. 335–36.
90 Sedlmayr, 'Bruegel's *Macchia*', p. 326.
91 Sedlmayr, 'Bruegel's *Macchia*', p. 336.
92 Sedlmayr, 'Bruegel's *Macchia*', p. 336.
93 Christopher S. Wood, 'Introduction', *The Vienna School Reader*, p. 16. The problem, of course, is the closeness of Sedlmayr's words to those of Goebbels and Hitler. Consider the latter's characterisation of 'degenerate' artists and their work in his opening address for the 1937 Great German Art Exhibition in Munich: '[W]hat are you manufacturing? Deformed cripples and cretins, women who look merely loathsome, men who resemble beasts rather than humans, children that if encountered in real life would be viewed as a curse of God.' 'Contemporary Voices', ed. and trans. John Willett, in *Art and Power: Europe under the Dictators, 1930–1945*, exh. cat. (London: Hayward Gallery, 1995), p. 338.
94 The full extent of Sedlmayr's involvement with national socialism has recently been uncovered. He joined the party already in 1930, leaving it over disagreements on cultural issues (though remaining close to other party members). Immediately before the *Anschluß* of March 1938, Sedlmayr was a member again. This was when the party was outlawed, as it represented a threat to the sovereignty of the Austrian state. The early members of the party – the so-called 'illegals' – enjoyed particular prestige in Nazi Austria, something from which Sedlmayr profited professionally. On Sedlmayr's activities under national socialism, see Albert Ottenbacher, 'Zu Hans Sedlmayr's "abendländischer Sendung"', *Kritische Berichte* XVIII: 3, 2001, pp. 71–83, and Aurenhammer, 'Hans Sedlmayr und die Kunstgeschichte an der Universität Wien, 1938–1945'.
95 Sedlmayr, 'Bruegel's *Macchia*', p. 339.
96 Sedlmayr, 'Bruegel's *Macchia*', pp. 339–40.
97 Sedlmayr, 'Bruegel's *Macchia*', p. 340.
98 Sedlmayr, 'Bruegel's *Macchia*', p. 346.
99 Sedlmayr, 'Bruegel's *Macchia*', p. 340.
100 Sedlmayr, 'Bruegel's *Macchia*', p. 341.
100 Sedlmayr, 'Bruegel's *Macchia*', p. 347.
102 Sedlmayr, 'Bruegel's *Macchia*', p. 344.
103 Sedlmayr, 'Bruegel's *Macchia*', p. 344.
104 Sedlmayr, 'Bruegel's *Macchia*', p. 349.
105 Sedlmayr, 'Bruegel's *Macchia*', p. 359.
106 Sedlmayr, 'Bruegel's *Macchia*', p. 325.
107 Sedlmayr, 'Bruegel's *Macchia*', p. 346.
108 Sedlmayr, 'Bruegel's *Macchia*', p. 346.
109 See Norbert Schneider, 'Hans Sedlmayr (1896–1984)', in Heinrich Dilly, ed., *Altmeister moderner Kunstgeschichte* (Berlin: Reimer, 1990); Willibald Sauerländer, 'Zersplitterte Errinerung', in Martina Sitt, ed., *Kunsthistoriker in eigener Sache* (Berlin: Reimer, 1990); Sauerländer, 'Hans Sedlmayrs *Verlust der Mitte*', in Sauerländer, *Geschichte der Kunst – Gegenwart der Kritik* (Cologne: DuMont, 1999); and Wood's introduction to *The Vienna School Reader*. An important account of the history of art under national socialism is Heinrich Dilly, *Deutsche Kunsthistoriker, 1933–1945* (Munich: Deutscher Kunstverlag, 1988).
110 Hans Sedlmayr, *Pieter Bruegel: Der Sturz der Blinden, Paradigma einer Strukturanalyse*, Hefte des Kunsthistorischen Seminars der Universität München II (Munich: Max Hueber, 1957), p. 4. This essay was reprinted, with significant changes and omissions, as 'Pieter Bruegel: Der Sturz der Blinden', in Sedlmayr, *Epoche und Werke* I (Vienna and Munich: Herold, 1959), pp. 319–57. My references are to the original publication.
111 Sedlmayr, *Pieter Bruegel: Der Sturz der Blinden*, p. 4.
112 Sedlmayr, *Pieter Bruegel: Der Sturz der Blinden*, pp. 5–6.
113 Sedlmayr, *Pieter Bruegel: Der Sturz der Blinden*, p. 5. On the evocation of Stifter, see Karl Mösender, 'Sedlmayr zitiert Stifter: Zur vorgeschichte des Begriffs "anschaulicher Charakter"', *Zeitschrift für Ästhetik und allgemeine Kunstwissenschaft* XLIII, 1998, pp. 47–57.
114 Sedlmayr, *Pieter Bruegel: Der Sturz der Blinden*, p. 6. See Philipp Lersch, *Der Aufbau*

des Charakters (Leipzig: J. A. Barth, 1938), p. 37: 'Of the aforementioned problems of characterology is that of the character structure the most important. It is the great achievement of L[udwig] Klages to have brought this matter to the fore in contemporary research on character, and to have sketched out . . . the essential characteristic qualities . . . The present study, however, is distinguished from Klages's in that the character structure is considered from the perspective of its *levels*.' Lersch distinguishes between an 'endothymic base' of emotive contents and experiences and the 'superstructure of consciousness in cognition and volition'; pp. 37–40.

115 Sedlmayr, *Pieter Bruegel: Der Sturz der Blinden*, p. 23.

116 Sedlmayr, *Pieter Bruegel: Der Sturz der Blinden*, p. 6.

117 Sedlmayr, *Pieter Bruegel: Der Sturz der Blinden*, p. 10.

118 Sedlmayr, *Pieter Bruegel: Der Sturz der Blinden*, pp. 32–33, on this last point citing Hedwig Conrad-Martius, 'Farben: Ein Kapitel aus der Realontologie', in *Festschrift für Edmund Husserl*, 1929, pp. 339–70.

119 Hans Sedlmayr, *Kunstwerk und Kunstgeschichte, Hefte des Kunsthistorischen Seminars der Universität München* I (Munich: Max Hueber, 1956), reprinted as 'Probleme der Interpretation' in Sedlmayr, *Kunst und Wahrheit: Zur Theorie und Methode der Kunstgeschichte* (Hamburg: Rowohlt, 1958), pp. 106–7.

120 Wood, ed., *The Vienna School Reader*, p. 63, n. 68.

121 John Graham, 'Lavater's Physiognomy in England', *Journal of the History of Ideas* XXII:4, 1961, p. 563. I have also found useful Michail Jampolski, 'Die Geburt einer Filmtheorie aus dem Geiste der Physiognomik', *Beiträge zur Film- und Fernsehwissenschaft* XXVII:2, 1986, pp. 79–98.

122 And, in addition to being a fundamental fact of experience and object of study, it was deeply inscribed in the discourses of architecture, economics and the law from the late nineteenth century. See Schwartz, *The Werkbund*, chapter two, part two; chapter three, part four.

123 Walter Benjamin, 'Der Geschmack', in *Gesammelte Schriften*, ed. R. Tiedemann and H. Schweppenhäuser I (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1974–1989), p. 1169.

124 See Allan Sekula, 'The Body and the Archive', *October* 39, 1986.

125 See, for example, the foreword to Claudia Schmölders and Sander Gilman, eds, *Gesichter der Weimarer Republik: Eine physiognomische Kulturgeschichte* (Cologne: DuMont, 2000), pp. 7–11.

126 On Balázs, see Helmut H. Diederichs's introduction to Béla Balázs, *Schriften zum Film* I, (Berlin: Henschel, 1982); Gertrud Koch, 'Béla Balázs: The Physiognomy of Things', *New German Critique* 40, 1987, pp. 167–77; Sabine Hake, *The Cinema's Third Machine: Writing on Film in Germany, 1907–1933* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1993), chapter ten; and Massimo Locatelli, *Béla Balázs: Die Physiognomik des Films* (Berlin: Vistas, 1999). On the Sunday circle, see, among other sources, Mary Gluck, *Georg Lukács and his Generation, 1900–1918* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1985), and E. Karadi and E. Vezer, eds, *Georg Lukács, Karl Mannheim und der Sonntagskreis* (Frankfurt: Sendler, 1985). On the Hungarian intellectuals in exile, see Lee Congdon, *Exile and Social Thought: Hungarian Intellectuals in Germany and Austria, 1919–1933* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1991), which has a chapter on Balázs.

127 *Der sichtbare Mensch*, in Balázs, *Schriften zum Film* I, p. 51.

128 Balázs, *Schriften zum Film* I, p. 52.

129 Balázs, *Schriften zum Film* I, p. 55.

130 Balázs, *Schriften zum Film* I, p. 53.

131 Balázs, *Schriften zum Film* I, pp. 56–57.

132 Balázs, *Schriften zum Film* I, p. 76.

133 Béla Balázs, *Der Geist des Films* (1930; Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 2001), pp. 9–10.

134 Theodor W. Adorno, *Mimima Moralia: Reflexionen aus dem beschädigten Leben, Gesammelte Schriften* IV, ed. R. Tiedemann (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1971–1986), p. 126.

135 On Bühler, see Mitchell G. Ash, 'Die Entwicklung des Wiener Psychologischen Instituts, 1922–1938', in Achim Eschbach, ed., *Karl Bühler's Theory of Language* (Amsterdam/Philadelphia: John Benjamins, 1988); as well as, in general, Ulfried Geuter, *Die Professionalisierung der deutschen Psychologie im Nationalsozialismus* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1984). For a well-informed account of the shifting field of early twentieth-century psychology from the standpoint

of the history and theory of art and architecture – one that, moreover, intersects with many of the figures and issues raised here – see Mark Jarzombek, *The Psychologizing of Modernity: Art, Architecture, and History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000).

136 Karl Bühler, *Die Krise der Psychologie* (Jena: Gustav Fischer, 1927).

137 Karl Bühler, *Die Gestaltwahrnehmungen* (Stuttgart: Spemann, 1913).

138 See Robert E. Innis, *Karl Bühler: Semiotic Foundations of Language Theory* (New York: Plenum, 1982); and Eschbach, ed., *Karl Bühler's Theory of Language*.

139 Karl Bühler, *Ausdruckstheorie: Das System an der Geschichte aufgezeigt* (Jena: Gustav Fischer, 1933), p. 1.

140 Bühler, *Ausdruckstheorie*, p. 1.

141 Bühler, *Ausdruckstheorie*, p. 15. The reference here is to Philipp Lersch, *Gesicht und Seele: Grundlinien einer mimischen Diagnostik* (Munich: Reinhardt, 1932).

142 Dr Hermann Strehle, *Analyse des Gebarens: Erforschung des Ausdrucks der Körperbewegung* (Berlin: Berhard & Graefe, 1935), p. 69.

143 Bühler, *Ausdruckstheorie*, p. 22.

144 Bühler's 'influence on us all was quite considerable. Bühler's lectures were frequented by many, and his seminar was a valuable source of new ideas. And though I don't think that [Julius von] Schlosser [Professor of Art History at the university] and Bühler were in personal contact, we students naturally knew many of his numerous disciples. Bühler too came from gestalt psychology, but his circle of interests was far broader. He was quite a historian when it came to the . . . history of his own interests. I think first of the lovely book *Ausdruckstheorie* . . . dated September 1933, though naturally the preliminary studies had long been known through his classes and seminars.' Ernst H. Gombrich, 'Kunstwissenschaft und Psychologie vor fünfzig Jahren', *Akten des XXV. Internationalen Kongresses für Kunstgeschichte I, Wien und die Entwicklung der kunsthistorischen Methode* (Vienna: Böhlau, 1984), pp. 101–2. Klaus Lepsky has considered Gombrich's work in the light of Bühler's work in 'Art and Language: Ernst H. Gombrich and Karl Bühler's Theory of Language', in Richard Woodfield, ed., *Gombrich on Art and Psychology* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1996), pp. 27–41.

145 A good short account is Martin Blankenburg, 'Der Seele auf den Leib gerückt. Die Physiognomik im Streit der Fakultäten', in Claudia Schmölders and Sander Gilman, eds, *Gesichter der Weimarer Republik: Eine physiognomische Kulturgeschichte* (Cologne: DuMont, 2000); see also Claudia Schmölders, *Das Vorurteil im Leibe: Eine Einführung in die Physiognomik*, second edition (Berlin: Akademie-Verlag, 1997).

146 Vienna: Gerold, 1928.

147 Rudolf Arnheim, 'Experimentell-psychologische Untersuchungen zum Ausdrucksproblem', *Psychologische Forschung* XI, 1928, pp. 2–132.

148 Balázs, *Schriften zum Film* I, p. 52.

149 Balázs, *Schriften zum Film* I, p. 53.

150 Karl Bühler, *Sprachtheorie: Die Darstellungsfunktion der Sprache* (Jena: Gustav Fischer, 1934), p. 7.

151 Heinz Werner, *Grundfragen der Sprachphysiognomik* (Leipzig: J. A. Barth, 1932), p. 28.

152 Here I paraphrase Bathrick's excellent discussion of the debate: 'Der ungleichzeitige Modernist', pp. 34–36.

153 Bathrick, 'Der ungleichzeitige Modernist', p. 35; S. M. Eisenstein, *Selected Works I: Writings 1922–32*, ed. Richard Taylor (London: British Film Institute, 1988), pp. 79–80.

154 Quoted in Bathrick, 'Der ungleichzeitige Modernist', p. 35.

155 It is interesting, but beyond the scope of this work, to note how much of Benjamin's work is disposed around the axis of montage in a way revealed by the discussions between Balázs and Eisenstein: montage serves him as a pivot between a phenomenological and a cognitive interpretation of disjunction. In the Artwork essay, the principle of montage is treated through the effect of shock, but pushes the phenomenology towards an epistemology. Similarly, in the Arcades Project: convolute N shows the theory of knowledge based on montage, while the discussions of gambling, machine labour, memory and experience focus on disjunction as part of the experiences of modernity. The work on Brecht is similarly informed by this duality. In his treatment of 'gesture' – in the theatrical discourse of the time discussed as 'expressive' in a physiognomic or nonconceptual way, Benjamin shifts to a notion of the isolation

of bodily movement as signifying: *Gestus* as the 'quotable gesture'. Here his example is – not coincidentally – typographical: ' "To make gestures quotable" is the actor's most important achievement; he must be able to space his gestures as the compositor produces spaced type.' Benjamin, 'Was ist das epische Theater', first version, *Gesammelte Schriften* II, p. 29; 'What is Epic Theatre (First Version)', *Understanding Brecht*, ed. S. Mitchell, trans. A. Bostock (London: NLB, 1973), p. 11. The constant oscillation between the linguistically arbitrary and the experientially motivated is one way that Benjamin complicates, in a dialectical way, the theories of the *Neues Sehen*. One related but limited aspect of the interweaving of bodily experience and knowledge that crystallises around the concepts of montage and shock is dealt with later in this chapter.

In this context, it is hardly surprising that Benjamin found the bait of Balázs's notion of the 'visible man' irresistible. On 11 November 1926, he wrote to Kracauer, asking if he could review *Der sichtbare Mensch*. (Benjamin, *Gesammelte Briefe* III, p. 215). Unfortunately (in this context) Kracauer reviewed the book himself, by and large positively (*Frankfurter Zeitung, Literaturblatt*, 10 July 1927).

156 Most important in this context is the work of Jonathan Crary: *Techniques of the Observer: On Vision and Modernity in the Nineteenth Century* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1990) and *Suspensions of Perception: Attention, Spectacle and Modern Culture* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1990).

157 There was another, and important, line of aesthetic thought that showed a different route out of neo-Kantianism. Instead of studying the visual in terms of the manipulation of meaning as a way of interacting with the world, it continued the Kantian problematic of the visual as a model of cognition at the same time as it overturned it. Here works of art are seen not as *expression* but as *thought-like*. We see the radical potential of this position in the work of Carl Einstein, for whom the immediacy of the visual not only challenges discursive meaning but meaning as such, a position Sebastian Zeidler calls 'anti-epistemological'. See Zeidler, 'Totality Against a Subject: Carl Einstein's *Negerplastik*', *October* 107, winter 2004, p. 38. The intersection between this trajectory and that of physiognomics is alluded to by Rainer Rumold, who notes Einstein's interest in 'psychologically direct signs'. Rumold, ' "Painting as a Language. Why Not?" Carl Einstein in *Documents*', *October* 107, winter 2004, pp. 85–86. Charles W. Haxthausen probes the relation between the thought of Benjamin and Einstein in 'Reproduction/Repitition: Walter Benjamin/Carl Einstein', *October* 107, winter 2004. See also Haxthausen, 'Bloody Serious: Two Texts by Carl Einstein', *October* 105, summer 2003. My thanks to Charles Haxthausen for sharing with me his insights into the work of Carl Einstein – long before I realized its importance.

158 Beginnings of a discursive analysis of physiognomic thought can be found in Schmölders, *Das Vorurteil im Leibe*, esp. chapter two.

159 Bühler wants to be seen neither as a historian of a dead tradition nor as a continuer of it: 'We must look broadly and consider every aspect of antique physiognomy to see what is peripheral and what truly belongs to it, to separate the incomprehensible and abstruse from the fruitful ideas.' His concern is to render a modern study of expression verifiable, using the example of Kretschmer to show that antique physiognomy has yielded to 'the exact science of modern morphology'. Bühler, *Ausdruckstheorie*, pp. 16, 22.

160 Ludwig Klages, *Ausdrucksgewegung und Gestaltungskraft: Grundlegung der Wissenschaft vom Ausdruck*, third/fourth edition (Leipzig: J. A. Barth, 1923); *Handschrift und Character*, fifth/sixth edition (Leipzig: J. A. Barth, 1923).

161 Two recent and helpful accounts that discuss Klages and his context are Stefan Breuer, *Ästhetischer Fundamentalismus: Stefan George und der deutsche Antimodernismus* (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1995), esp. chapter two; and Raymond Furness, *Zarathustra's Children: A Study of a Lost Generation of German Writers* (Rochester, New York: Camden House, 2000), esp. chapter four.

162 Ludwig Klages, *Vom kosmogonischen Eros* (Munich: Georg Müller, 1922); *Vom Wesen des Bewußtseins: Aus einer Lebenswissenschaftlichen Vorlesung*, second edition (Leipzig: J. A. Barth); *Der Geist als Widersacher der Seele* (1929–32; fourth edition, Leipzig and Munich: J. A. Barth/H. Bouvier, 1960).

163 See Werner Fuld, 'Die Aura: Zur Geschichte eines Begriffes bei Benjamin', *Akzente* XXVI, 1979, pp. 352–70; Fuld's more important 'Walter Benjamins Beziehung zu Ludwig Klages', *Akzente* XXVIII, 1981, pp. 274–87; Julian Roberts's underappreciated *Walter Benjamin* (London: Macmillan, 1982), esp. pp. 103–9; John McCole, *Walter Benjamin and the Antinomies of Tradition* (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1993); and Michael Grossheim, 'Archaisches oder dialektisches Bild? Zum Kontext einer Debatte zwischen Adorno und Benjamin', *Deutsche Vierteljahrsschrift für Literaturwissenschaft und Geistesgeschichte* LXXI, 1997, pp. 495–517.

164 It includes the biologist F. J. J. Buytendijk, the archaeologist Ludwig Curtius, the philosopher Max Dessoir, the psychologists Erich Jaensch and William Stern, Wilhlem Pinder, Hans Prinzhorn, the architect Paul Schmitthenner, and Jakob von Uexküll. *Die Wissenschaft am Scheideweg von Leben und Geist. Festschrift Ludwig Klages zum 60. Geburtstag* (Leipzig: J. A. Barth, 1932).

165 Bühler writes of him as 'the best-known theoretician of expression of the present . . . who began his work in the era of Wundt and developed it in pointed opposition to Wundt's psychophysics and his school. It is his historical importance to have seen the weaknesses of old-style experimental science, at a time when others saw in it their salvation. . . . He has opened up . . . a respectable source of knowledge in the study of expression and graphology.' Bühler, *Ausdruckstheorie*, p. 3.

166 Ludwig Klages, *Der Geist als Widersacher der Seele* I, *Leben und Denkvermögen* (Leipzig: J. A. Barth, 1929), p. xvi.

167 'The old forms of transmission are not unaffected by the newly emerging ones nor do they survive alongside them. The film viewer reads stories differently. But the storywriter views films too.' Bertolt Brecht, 'The *Threepenny* Lawsuit', in Marc Silberman, ed. and trans., *Bertolt Brecht on Film and Radio* (London: Methuen, 2000), p. 161.

168 *The Correspondence of Walter Benjamin and Gershom Scholem, 1932–1940*, ed. Gershom Scholem, trans. Gary Smith and Andre Lefevere (New York: Schocken, 1989), p. 97.

169 Walter Benjamin, review of Oskar Walzel, *Das Wortkunstwerk*, in *Gesammelte Schriften* III, p. 50; trans. in Michael W. Jennings, *Dialectical Images: Walter Benjamin's Theory of Literary Criticism* (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1987), p. 161.

170 Walter Benjamin, 'Lebenslauf (III)', *Gesammelte Schriften* VI, p. 219; see also Jennings, *Dialectical Images*, p. 162.

171 Sedlmayr, 'Zu einer strengen Kunstwissenschaft', p. 53; 'Toward a Rigorous Study of Art', p. 155 (trans. modified). Furthermore they are united in their rejection – Sedlmayr's implicit, Benjamin's explicit – of a more circumspect Wölfflinean formalism. 'He does not see the artwork', wrote Benjamin after attending Wölfflin's lectures. 'It is clear to me that what we have here is the most disastrous activity I have ever encountered in a German university.' They clearly recognised the neo-Kantian aspect of Wölfflin's approach. Instead of attending to the specifics of an individual work, he sought out common denominators and interpreted them as transcendental, *a priori* categories of analysis. See the letter of 4 December 1915 to Fritz Radt, Walter Benjamin, *Gesammelte Briefe* I, p. 296; trans. Thomas Y. Levin, 'Walter Benjamin and the Theory of Art History', *October* 47, 1988, p. 79.

172 See the 1928 review of Anja und Georg Mendelssohn, *Der Mensch in der Handschrift*, in Benjamin, *Gesammelte Schriften* III, pp. 135–39; the 1930 article 'Alte und neue Graphologie', *Gesammelte Schriften* IV, pp. 596 98; and the editor's comments in *Gesammelte Schriften* VI, pp. 747–48, which is followed by his own extended analysis of the handwriting of an 'R. L.' (perhaps Rudolf Leonhard?), written in 1926.

173 Benjamin, 'Lebenslauf (III)', in *Gesammelte Schriften* VI, p. 219.

174 Rolf Tiedemann, 'Dialectics at a Standstill', in Walter Benjamin, *The Arcades Project*, ed. R. Tiedemann, trans. Howard Eiland and Kevin McLaughlin (Cambridge, Mass.: Belknap/Harvard University Press, 1999), p. 940.

175 Benjamin, *Arcades Project*, p. 392 (K2, 5).

176 Jürgen Habermas, 'Walter Benjamin: Conscioiusness-Raising or Rescuing Critique' (1972), in Gary Smith, ed., *On Walter Benjamin* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1988), p. 116.

177 Benjamin, 'Über das Programm der kommenden Philosophie', *Gesammelte Schriften* II, p. 158; trans. in Walter Benjamin, *Selected Writings II: 1913–1926*, ed. Marcus Bullock

and Michael W. Jennings (Cambridge: Belknap/Harvard, 1996), p. 100.

178 Benjamin, *Gesammelte Schriften* II, p. 158; *Selected Writings* I, p. 101.

179 Howard Caygill, *Walter Benjamin: The Colour of Experience* (London: Routledge, 1998), p. 3.

180 Caygill, *Walter Benjamin*, p. xiv.

181 Caygill, *Walter Benjamin*, p. 12.

182 Benjamin, 'Über Sprache überhaupt und über die Sprache des Menschen', *Gesammelte Schriften* II, p. 140; *Selected Writings* I, p. 62 (trans. modified).

183 Benjamin, *Gesammelte Schriften* II, pp. 140–41; *Selected Writings* I, p. 62 (trans. modified).

184 Benjamin, *Gesammelte Schriften* II, p. 141; *Selected Writings* I, pp. 62–63 (trans. modified).

185 Jennings, *Dialectical Images*, p. 94.

186 Walter Benjamin, 'Lehre vom Ähnlichen', *Gesammelte Schriften* II, p. 204; Benjamin, 'Doctrine of the Similar', in *Selected Writings* II, p. 694.

187 Benjamin, *Gesammelte Schriften* II, p. 204; *Selected Writings* II, p. 694.

188 Benjamin, *Gesammelte Schriften* II, p. 208; *Selected Writings* II, p. 697. Two works that deal insightfully with the relation between mimesis, physiognomy and 'nonsensuous similarity' in Benjamin's work are Hermann Schweppenhäuser, 'Physiognomie eines Physiognomikers', in Siegfried Unseld, ed., *Zur Aktualität Walter Benjamins* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1972), and Gunter Gebauer and Christoph Wulf, *Mimesis: Culture, Art, Society*, trans. D. Reneau (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1995), chapter twenty-one. An interesting but polemically flawed attempt, partially inspired by Benjamin, to rescue the notion of mimesis from a structuralist-inspired abstention from hermeneutics and experience, is Michael Taussig, *Mimesis and Alterity: A Particular History of the Senses* (London: Routledge, 1993).

189 Benjamin, *Gesammelte Schriften* II, pp. 207–208; *Selected Writings* II, p. 696. In late 1929, Benjamin wrote of a hilarious argument with, of all people, Béla Balázs on this topic. See *Gesammelte Schriften* VI, p. 418; *Selected Writings* II, pp. 276–77.

190 Benjamin, *Gesammelte Schriften* II, p. 208; *Selected Writings* II, p. 696.

191 Benjamin, *Gesammelte Schriften* II, pp. 204–205; *Selected Writings* II, p. 694.

192 Sedlmayr, *Kunst und Wahrheit*, p. 106.

193 Balázs, *Schriften zum Film* I, p. 55.

194 Benjamin, *Gesammelte Schriften* II, pp. 205, 210; *Selected Writings* II, pp. 694, 698.

195 Benjamin, *Gesammelte Schriften* II, p. 206; *Selected Writings* II, p. 695.

196 See Charlotte Bühler, *Kindheit und Jugend: Genese des Bewußtseins* (1928; third edition, Leipzig: Hirzel, 1931), p. 198; Kurt Koffka, *Principles of Gestalt Psychology* (London: Kegan Paul, 1935), pp. 359–67; Heinz Werner, *Comparative Psychology of Mental Development* (1926, revised editon, New York: International Universities Press, 1948), pp. 59–104, 263–67.

197 Benjamin, *Gesammelte Schriften* II, p. 957.

198 Vítězslav Nezval, *Abeceda* (Prague: Nákladem J. Otto, 1926). The dancer pictured is Milči Mayerové, photographed by Karel Paspa.

199 In addition to the letter cited above, see the 'Verzeichnis der gelesenen Schriften', Benjamin, *Gesammelte Schriften* VII, p. 467.

200 Sedlmayr paraphrases Werner's essays 'Über die Sprachphysiognomik' and 'Die Rolle der Sprachempfindung', which appeared in the *Zeitschrift für Psychologie* (1928/1929), in 'Towards a Rigorous Study of Art', pp. 177 n. 7, 178, n. 24, 26. Sedlmayr's essay was in the volume of *Kunstwissenschaftliche Forschung* that Benjamin was reviewing at precisely this time. Benjamin might well have learned of Werner's work either from the references in Sedlmayr's essay, or from his 'cousin' (by marriage) William Stern, who held the chair in psychology at the University of Hamburg, where Werner was director of the laboratory for developmental psychology. Both lost their positions in 1933 and emigrated to the US. See the biographies in Geuter, *Der Professionalisierung der deutschen Psychologie*, pp. 580–81.

201 Heinz Werner, *Grundfragen der Sprachphysiognomik* (Leipzig: J. A. Barth, 1932), p. 2.

202 Werner, *Grundfragen der Sprachphysiognomik*, p. 2.

203 Sedlmayr, 'Bruegel's *Macchia*', p. 323.

204 Werner, *Grundfragen der Sprachphysiognomik*, p. 1.

205 Werner, *Grundfragen der Sprachphysiognomik*, p. 3.

206 Werner, *Grundfragen der Sprachphysiognomik*, p. 10.

207 Werner, *Grundfragen der Sprachphysiognomik*, p. 58.

208 Werner's examples seem strangely naïve,

depending on experimental subjects' response to the utterance of words whose meaning they know. To show the 'physicality of linguistic expression', he cites the following response: '*Müde* (tired) is without character, without support. The soft consonants *m* and *d*, combined with the long *ü*, are the carriers of this limp character. One has the impression that the word leaves all one's limbs hanging . . . The mimic experience (*Diese Mimik, die ich erlebe*) is hardly acoustic, and not at all optical.' Werner, *Grundfragen der Sprachphysiognomik*, p. 34. Benjamin, interested in psychological experimentation, does not see the results as vitiated by this problem, but wanted more information. He wrote in his notes at the time: '[Heinz] Werner's *Sprachphysiognomik* contains no information about the experimental subjects. From what social milieu do they come? Certainly uneducated subjects are not suitable for these experiments, as they demand a high level of introspection [*Selbstbeobachtung*]. On the other hand, the topic makes it hard to ignore such subjects. Precisely the reactions of simple people and children should be investigated.' *Gesammelte Schriften* II, p. 957.

209 Werner, *Grundfragen der Sprachphysiognomik*, p. 71.

210 Walter Benjamin, *Gesammelte Briefe* II, ed. Christoph Gödde and Henri Lonitz (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1996), pp. 108–109.

211 'Werner describes the phenomenon [of linguistic physiognomy] in all its ramifications, without undertaking an explanation. Above all, it is not impossible, following his discussion, to understand the whole investigation as a psychological one . . . On the other side, justice is not done to historical questions. And yet his observation that the relevant phenomena appear particularly strongly in the primitive languages ought to have dictated research into the causal connections that have made their mark in the physiognomic character of language. Elsewhere too the relationship between the behaviour of the linguistic physiognomist and archaic behaviour and thought (*archaischen Verhalutngs- oder Vorstellungsweisen*) is clear.' Benjamin, *Gesammelte Schriften* II, p. 957.

212 Werner, *Grundfragen der Sprachphysiognomik*, p. 6.

213 Helmuth Plessner, 'Die Deutung des mimeschen Ausdrucks: Ein Beitrag zur Lehre vom Bewußtsein des anderen Ichs', *Philosophische Anzeiger* I, 1925/26, pp. 72–126; reprinted in Plessner, *Gesammelte Schriften* VII, *Ausdruck und menschliche Natur* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1982) and Plessner, *Zwischen Philosophie und Gesellschaft: Ausgewählte Abhandlungen und Vorträge* (Bern: Francke, 1953); my references are to this last edition. Only the original publication lists both Plessner and Buytendijk as authors; presumably Plessner is largely or wholly responsible for the text.

214 The title of a book by Winfried Menninghaus: *Walter Benjamin's Theorie der Sprachmagie* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1995).

215 In this discussion I shall blur the distinction between mimic and mimetic, mimicry and mimesis. As will become clear, the distinction between the two cannot be sustained, and they overlap considerably in the work I shall be discussing. For Fredric Jameson, mimicry represents 'a strong form of mimesis': Fredric Jameson, *Late Marxism: Adorno, or, The Persistence of the Dialectic* (London: Verso, 1990). Jürgen Habermas similarly accepts a continuity of meaning from the mimesis of Benjamin and Adorno to the studies of mime and mimicry in Plessner. See 'Philosophische Anthropologie (ein Lexikonartikel)' (1958), in Habermas, *Kultur und Kritik: Verstreute Aufsätze* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1973), pp. 89–111.

216 Plessner, 'Die Deutung des mimeschen Ausdrucks', p. 134.

217 Plessner, 'Die Deutung des mimeschen Ausdrucks', pp. 134–35.

218 Plessner, 'Die Deutung des mimeschen Ausdrucks', p. 135.

219 Plessner, 'Die Deutung des mimeschen Ausdrucks', p. 138.

220 Plessner, 'Die Deutung des mimeschen Ausdrucks', pp. 138–39.

221 Plessner, 'Die Deutung des mimeschen Ausdrucks', p. 140.

222 Helmuth Plessner, *Laughing and Crying: A Study of the Limits of Human Behavior*, trans. J. S. Churchill and M. Grene (Evanston, Ill.: Northwestern University Press, 1970), p. 5.

223 Plessner, 'Die Deutung des mimeschen Ausdrucks', p. 145.

224 Plessner, 'Die Deutung des mimeschen Ausdrucks', p. 135.

225 Plessner, 'Die Deutung des mimeschen Ausdrucks', p. 135.

226 Two issues must be identified but bracketed out: first, the relation of Plessner to Heidegger; and second, the relation to the French tradition of phenomenology, through Merleau-Ponty. All, of course, have roots in Husserl and the crisis of the human sciences in the early years of the twentieth century. My purpose here is to show one of the ways in which the work of Benjamin (and Adorno) responded positively to the challenge of phenomenology, something to which Plessner's approach gives better access. Recent years have certainly seen a 'phenomenological turn' in the history of art – I adopt the phrase from Alex Potts – and I would hope that the full range of attempts to deal with embodied response – from Scheler to Plessner, Pächt to Badt, as well as Benjamin and Adorno – are taken into account. Recent work marking this 'turn' include Potts's fundamental *The Sculptural Imagination: Figurative, Modernist, Minimalist* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2000), which includes extensive discussions of Adorno and Merleau-Ponty, and the work of Michael Fried, most recently *Menzel's Realism: Art and Embodiment in Nineteenth-Century Berlin* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2002). The revival of interest in empathy theory is also relevant; see the important introduction and translations in Harry Francis Mallgrave and Eleftherios Ikonomou, eds and trans., *Empathy, Form, and Space: Problems in German Aesthetics, 1873–1893* (Santa Monica, Calif.: The Getty Center for the History of Art and the Humanities, 1994).

227 Benjamin, *Gesammelte Schriften* VI, p. 80; *Selected Writings* I, p. 395 (trans. modified).

228 Helmuth Plessner, *Die Einheit der Sinne: Grundlinien einer Ästhesiologie des Geistes* (1923), in Plessner, *Gesammelte Schriften* III (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1980).

229 Plessner, *Gesammelte Schriften* III, p. 14.

230 Plessner, *Gesammelte Schriften* III, p. 16.

231 Plessner, *Gesammelte Schriften* III, p. 115.

232 Plessner, *Gesammelte Schriften* III, p. 114.

233 Gershom Scholem recounts Benjamin's 'extreme formulation': 'A philosophy that cannot accommodate and explain the possibility of soothsaying from *coffee grounds* cannot be a true philosophy.' Scholem, *Walter Benjamin: Die Geschichte einer Freundschaft* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1975), p. 77.

234 Plessner, *Gesammelte Schriften* III, pp. 19–20.

235 Plessner, *Gesammelte Schriften* III, p. 282.

236 Confusingly, the English translator of this text in the *Selected Writings* falls into the trap of this colloquial distinction and considers the *Leib* as the 'repository of the soul' and thus belonging to 'a slightly higher register' than *Körper*. Benjamin's text, as we shall see, does not bear this out. Because no translation can capture Benjamin's distinction – one counterintuitive even in German – I shall leave the words untranslated. See Benjamin, *Selected Writings* I, p. 401, n. 1.

237 Ludwig Klages, *Vom Wesen des Bewußtseins* (1921), Second edition (Leipzig: J. A. Barth, 1926), pp. 40–42.

238 Benjamin, *Gesammelte Schriften* VI, p. 78; *Selected Writings* I, p. 393 (trans. modified).

239 Benjamin, *Gesammelte Schriften* VI, p. 79; *Selected Writings* I, p. 394 (trans. modified).

240 Benjamin, *Gesammelte Schriften* VI, p. 78; *Selected Writings* I, p. 393.

241 Benjamin, *Gesammelte Schriften* VI, p. 78; *Selected Writings* I, p. 393.

242 Benjamin, *Gesammelte Schriften* VI, p. 79; *Selected Writings* I, p. 394.

243 Benjamin, *Gesammelte Schriften* VI, p. 79; *Selected Writings* I, p. 394.

244 Ludwig Klages, *Vom Wesen des Bewußtseins* (Leipzig: J. A. Barth, 1921); Klages, *Vom kosmogonischen Eros* (Munich: Georg Müller, 1922). Benjamin, *Gesammelte Schriften* VI, p. 84; *Selected Writings* I, p. 398.

245 In two recent essays, Uwe Steiner has also addressed Benjamin's distinction between *Körper* and *Leib*. He relates it to the distinction between *Körper* and *Leib* that Benjamin's Bern teacher Paul Häberlin elaborated in his *Der Leib und die Seele* of 1922, which was known to Benjamin; he concludes, nonetheless, that it is inappropriate to see Häberlin's work as a 'significant influence' on Benjamin. See Steiner, 'Von Bern nach Muri: Vier unveröffentlichte Briefe Walter Benjamins an Paul Häberlin im Kontext', *Deutsche Vierteljahrsschrift für Literaturwissenschaft und Geistesgeschichte* LXXV: 3, 2001, p. 483, and 'The True Politician: Walter Benjamin's Concept of the Political', *New German Critique* 83, 2001, esp. pp. 44–61. (Plessner's similar distinction, I should add, is certainly even less to be con-

sidered an influence.) Steiner's discussion on the relation between Benjamin and the contemporary 'psychophysical problem' is very insightful, though I would argue that the problematic of 'expression' as an approach to the psychophysical problem must be taken into account.

246 Plessner, *Gesammelte Schriften* III, p. 286.

247 I borrow this formulation from Axel Honneth and Hans Joas, *Social Action and Human Nature*, trans. R. Meyer (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), p. 73.

248 Honneth and Joas, *Social Action and Human Nature*, p. 75.

249 Helmuth Plessner, *Die Stufen des Organischen und der Mensch*, in Plessner, *Gesammelte Schriften* IV (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1981), p. 365; see also the translation of this passage in Honneth and Joas, *Social Action and Human Nature*, pp. 75–76.

250 Habermas, 'Philosophical Anthropologie', p. 96. Plessner's is, of course, not the first philosophical exploration of the *Leib/Körper* distinction. Before Häberlin, it is discussed by Max Scheler in 'Die Idole der Selbsterkenntnis' of 1911 and in greater depth in the later portion of *Der Formalismus in der Ethik und die materiale Wertethik* (1913/1916); see 'The Idols of Self-Knowledge', in Scheler, *Selected Philosophical Essays*, ed. and trans. David R. Lachterman (Evanston, Ill.: Northwestern University Press, 1973), esp. pp. 37–38; and Scheler, *Formalism in Ethics and Non-Formal Ethics of Values*, trans. Manfred S. Frings and Roger L. Funk (Evanston, Ill.: Northwestern University Press, 1973), esp. pp. 398–402. The relation between Plessner and Scheler in the 1920s was a poisoned one: Scheler considered Plessner's work a mere repetition or plagiarism of his own; the younger scholar, for his part, found Scheler unwilling to engage with his work and eager to claim authorship of Plessner's own contributions. Without entering into this matter too deeply, one can say that the division between *Leib* and *Körper* is seen by Scheler as *characteristic* of mankind; for Plessner, it is, in the form of the 'eccentric positionality', *constitutive* of human existince. See Joachim Fischer, 'Exzentrische Positionalität: Plessners Grundkategorie der Philosophischen Anthropologie', *Deutsche Zeitschrift für Philosophie* XLVIII: 2, 2000: 265–88; and Hans-Peter Krüger, 'Das Spiel zwischen Leibsein und Körperhaben: Helmuth Plessners Philosophische Anthropologie', *Deutsche Zeitschrift für Philosophie* XLVIII: 2, 2000, pp. 289–318.

251 Habermas, 'Philosophical Anthropologie', p. 98.

252 Benjamin, 'Wahrnehmung und Leib', *Gesammelte Schriften* VI, p. 67. Benjamin's German editors date these notes to 1918–1920/21. At roughly the same time, in *Vom Wesen des Bewußtseins*, Klages writes of *Geist* as the 'eccentricity of the soul' (pp. 41–42).

253 Benjamin, *Gesammelte Schriften* VI, p. 67.

254 There is now a growing literature on the relation of Benjamin's thought to Schmitt's. See, among others, Horst Bredekamp, 'From Walter Benjamin to Carl Schmitt, via Thomas Hobbes', *Critical Inquiry* XXV: 2, 1999; and Samuel Weber, 'Taking Exception to Decision: Walter Benjamin and Carl Schmitt', in Harry Kunneman and Hent de Vries, eds, *Enlightenments: Encounters between Critical Theory and Contemporary French Thought* (Kampen: Kok, 1993). On Plessner and Schmitt, see Rüdiger Kramme, *Helmuth Plessner und Carl Schmitt: Eine historische Fallstudie von Anthropologie und Politik in der deutschen Philosophie der zwanziger Jahre* (Berlin: Duncker & Humblot, 1989); as well as, in English, Helmut Lethen, *Cool Conduct: The Culture of Distance in Weimar Germany*, trans. Don Renau (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002), esp. pp. 88–95.

255 Lethen, *Cool Conduct*. In this extraordinary book, Lethen provides a powerful reading of *The Limits of Community* as a model of this 'cool conduct', one fundamental to the thought of the Weimar period (and relevant to Benjamin). This is certainly one of the most insightful and far-reaching treatments of Plessner to have appeared in the recent revival of interest in his work. Where I disagree with Lethen is the sharp distinction he draws between the *Limits of Community* – with its critique of political expressionism's demand for authenticity – and the studies of mimic expression. They are, I argue, part of the same project; the 'cool persona' is unthinkable without the sense of *Verhalten* as developed in the work with Buytendijk – work conceived as an extension of Dilthey's hermeneutic of lived experience and which involved a productive use of the writings of Ludwig Klages. As in

his somewhat Saussurean treatment of Bühler, I find Lethen inattentive to the theme of expression and intersubjectivity that runs through these works; he tends to see expressive movements as 'part of the formal language of behavior' (*Cool Conduct*, p. 83) and thus gives short shrift to the dialectic of intimacy and distance central to studies of expression and language of the time (of which he otherwise provides such a fine analysis).

256 Steiner, 'The True Politician' and 'Von Bern nach Muri'.

257 There is already an important account that explores the Artwork essay in the light of Benjamin's theory of experience, one from which I have learned much and which I often echo: Mariam Hansen, 'Benjamin, Cinema and Experience: "The Blue Flower in the Land of Technology"', *New German Critique* 40, 1987. Hansen also isolates a concept internal to Benjamin's thought – 'innervation' – as a link between the speculative account of experience and the materialist ambitions of the Artwork essay in her more recent 'Benjamin and Cinema: Not a One-Way Street', *Critical Inquiry* XXV: 2, 1999. Esther Leslie also discusses the role of the concept of mimesis in the Artwork essay; her account is particularly interesting for the attention it gives to the particular nature of Benjamin's second version: see Leslie, *Walter Benjamin: Overpowering Conformism* (London: Pluto Press, 2000), chapter six. My aim in relating Benjamin's work to other physiognomies of art is, of course, to identify coordinates by which to understand Benjamin's thinking from outside his own work.

258 Benjamin, *Einbahnstraße*, in *Gesammelte Schriften* IV, p. 141; 'One-Way Street', *Selected Writings* I, p. 482.

259 Benjamin, *Gesammelte Schriften* IV, p. 141; *Selected Writings* I, p. 482.

260 Benjamin, *Gesammelte Schriften* IV, p. 141; *Selected Writings* I, p. 483.

261 Benjamin, *Gesammelte Schriften* IV, p. 141–42; *Selected Writings* I, p. 483 (trans. modified).

262 Benjamin, *Gesammelte Schriften* IV, p. 142; *Selected Writings* I, p. 483 (trans. modified).

263 Benjamin, *Gesammelte Schriften* IV, p. 141; *Selected Writings* I, p. 482 (trans. modified).

264 Benjamin, *Gesammelte Schriften* IV, p. 141; *Selected Writings* I, p. 483 (trans. modified).

265 Heiner Weidmann, 'Geistesgegenwart: Das Spiel in Walter Benjamins Passagenarbeit', MLN CVII, 1992, pp. 521–47.

266 Benjamin, *Gesammelte Schriften* VI, p. 639; *The Arcades Project*, pp. 512–13 [O12a, 2].

267 Benjamin, *Gesammelte Schriften* VI, p. 639; *The Arcades Project*, p. 513 [O13, 2].

268 Benjamin, *Gesammelte Schriften* VI, p. 640; *The Arcades Project*, p. 513 [O13, 5] (trans. modified).

269 Benjamin, 'Notizen zu einer Theorie des Spiels', *Gesammelte Schriften* VI, p. 189.

270 Weidmann, 'Geistesgegenwart', p. 539.

271 Ludwig Klages, *Vom kosmogonischen Eros* (Munich: Georg Müller, 1922), p. 43.

272 Benjamin, 'Das Kunstwerk im Zeitalter seiner technischen Reproduzierbarkeit', first ver., *Gesammelte Schriften* I, p. 440.

273 Klages, *Vom Wesen des Bewußtseins*, quoted in Thomas Rolf, '"Vom Subjekt auf dem Siedepunkt": Zur Phänomenologie der Ekstase bei Ludwig Klages und Georges Bataille', in Andreas Hetzel and Peter Wiechens, eds, *Georges Bataille: Vorreden zur Überschreitung* (Würzburg: Königshausen & Neumann, 1999), p. 122. For an account of the relation of Benjamin's work to Klages's thought that goes beyond the usual focus on the concept of aura, see Michael Grossheim, 'Archaisches oder dialektisches Bild? Zum Kontext einer Debatte zwischen Adorno und Benjamin', *Deutsches Vierteljahresschrift für Literaturwissenschaft und Geistesgeschichte* LXXI, 1997, pp. 495–517.

274 Quoted in Rolf, 'Vom Subjekt auf dem Siedepunkt', p. 117.

275 Benjamin, 'Zur Geschichtsphilosophie der Spätromantik und der historischen Schule', *Gesammelte Schriften* VI, p. 96; 'The Philosophy of History of the Late Romantics and the Historical School', *Selected Writings* I, p. 284.

276 'Innerhalb großer geschichtlicher Zeiträume verändert sich mit der gesamten Daseinsweise der historischen Kollektiva auch ihre Wahrnehmung', Benjamin, *Gesammelte Schriften* I, p. 439. In the final version, the passage reads: 'Innerhalb großer geschichtlicher Zeiträume verändert sich mit der geamten Daseinsweise der historischen Kollektiva auch *die Art und Weise* ihrer *Sinnes*wahrnehmung' ('During long periods of history, the *mode* of human *sense* perception changes with humanity's entire mode of exis-

tence'; emphasis added): 'Das Kunstwerk im Zeitalter seiner technischen Reproduzierbarkeit', Benjamin, *Gesammelte Schriften* I, p. 478; *Illuminations*, p. 222.

277 Benjamin, 'Das Kunstwerk im Zeitalter seiner technischen Reproduzierbarkeit', *Gesammelte Schriften* I, p. 498; *Illuminations*, p. 235 (trans. modified).

278 Benjamin, *Gesammelte Schriften* I, pp. 499–500, *Illuminations*, p. 236.

279 Benjamin, *Gesammelte Schriften* I, pp. 461–62. For a discussion of this passage that stresses the cathartic aspect of the visual logic of psychosis, see Caygill, *Walter Benjamin*, p. 113.

280 Benjamin, *Gesammelte Schriften* I, p. 466.

281 Werner, *Grundfragen der Sprachphysiognomik*, p. 34.

282 Benjamin, *Gesammelte Schriften* I, p. 464.

283 Benjamin, *Gesammelte Schriften* I, p. 1041.

284 Benjamin, *Gesammelte Schriften* I, p. 505; *Illuminations*, p. 240 (trans. modified).

285 Benjamin, *Gesammelte Schriften* V, p. 595; *The Arcades Project*, p. 476 [N11, 2].

286 Benjamin, *Gesammelte Schriften* V, p. 586; *The Arcades Project*, p. 470 [N7, 2].

287 Benjamin, *Gesammelte Schriften* V, p. 592; *The Arcades Project*, p. 473 [N91, 3].

288 Benjamin, *Gesammelte Schriften* V, pp. 586–87; *The Arcades Project*, pp. 469–70 [N7, 2].

289 Walter Benjamin, 'Surrealism', in *Reflections: Essays, Aphorisms, Autobiographical Writings*, trans. E. Jephcott (New York: Schocken, 1986), p. 189.

290 Letter to Benjamin of 18 March 1936. Walter Benjamin and Theodor W. Adorno, *The Complete Correspondence, 1928–1940*, trans. N. Walker (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1999), p. 130.

291 Sedlmayr, 'Bruegel's *Macchia*', p. 344.

292 Benjamin, 'Über einige Motive bei Baudelaire', *Gesammelte Schriften* I, pp. 646–74. I follow here Miriam Hansen's translation in 'Benjamin, Cinema and Experience', pp. 187–88.

293 Theodor W. Adorno, *Ästhetische Theorie* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1973), p. 172; *Aesthetic Theory*, trans. Robert Hullot-Kentor (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1997), p. 112 (trans. modified).

294 See, for example, Albrecht Wellmer, *The Persistence of Modernity: Essays on Aesthetics, Ethics, and Postmodernism* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1991), pp. 3–4, 59–63, and Georg Stauth and Bryan S. Turner, 'Ludwing Klages (1872–1956) and the Origins of Critical Theory', *Theory, Cuture and Society* IX, 1992, pp. 45–63.

295 Benjamin's role as a conduit between the *Collège de Sociologie* and the *Institut für Sozialforschung* is duscussed in Michael Weingrad, 'The College of Sociology and the Institute of Social Research', *New German Critique* 84, 2001.

296 Max Horkheimer and Theodor W. Adorno, *Dialektik der Aufklärung: Philosophische Fragmente* (Amsterdam: Querido, 1947), p. 34; *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, trans. J. Cumming (New York: Continuum, 1987), pp. 17–18 (trans. modified).

297 Werner, *Grundfragen der Sprachphysiognomik*, p. 12.

298 Werner, *Grundfragen der Sprachphysiognomik*, p. 45.

299 Josef Früchtl, *Mimesis: Konstellation eines Zentralbegriffs bei Adorno* (Würzburg: Königshausen und Neumann, 1986); Shierry Weber Nicholsen, '*Aesthetic Theory*'s Mimesis of Walter Benjamin', in *Exact Imagination, Late Work: On Adorno's Aesthetics* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1997), esp. pp. 145–52. See also Karla L. Schultz, *Mimesis on the Move: Theodor W. Adorno's Concept of Imitation* (Bern: Peter Lang, 1990), and the very short but useful account in Gebauer and Wulf, *Mimesis*, chapter twenty-two.

300 Andreas Huyssen, 'Of Mice and Mimesis: Reading Spiegelman with Adorno', *New German Critique* 81, 2000, pp. 66–67.

301 Jameson, *Late Marxism*, p. 64.

302 Jameson, *Late Marxism*, p. 256. Jameson's discussion focuses on the role of the concept of mimesis in Adorno's *Negative Dialectics*; see *Late Marxism*, esp. pp. 63–72.

303 On Plessner at the Frankfurt *Institut für Sozialforschung*, see Rolf Wiggershaus, *The Frankfurt School: Its History, Theories, and Political Significance*, trans. M. Robertson (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1994), p. 459; and Kersten Schüßler, *Helmuth Plessner: Eine intellektuelle Biographie* (Berlin: Philo, 2000), pp. 176–86. Monika Plessner's more personal recollections of her and her husband's contact with Adorno and Horkheimer are recounted in her *Die Argonauten auf Long Island: Begegnungen mit Hannah Arendt, Theodor W. Adorno, Gershom Scholem und anderen* (Berlin:

Rowohlt, 1995), pp. 47–71.

304 'Ist Kunst an sich im Innersten ein Verhalten, so ist sie nicht vom Ausdruck zu isolieren, und der ist nicht ohne Subjekt' Adorno, *Ästhetische Theorie*, p. 68. Robert Hullot-Kentor's superb (indeed heroic) new translation still fails to grasp the meaning of this sentence. He translates it as follows: 'While art is in the last analysis a form of behaviour, it cannot be completely isolated from expression, which in turn presupposes the subject.' *Aesthetic Theory*, p. 61. Hullot-Kentor's translation creates a distinction between behaviour and expression, while Adorno's point is that *Verhalten* and *Ausdruck* are part of the same mode of behaviour.

305 'Kunst ist Zuflucht des mimetischen Verhaltens. In ihr stellt das Subjekt, auf wechselnded Stufen seiner Autonomie, sich zu seinem Anderen, davon getrennt und doch nicht durchaus getrennt.' Adorno, *Ästhetische Theorie*, p. 86; *Aesthetic Theory*, p. 53 (trans. modified).

306 'Die Erinnerungsspur der Mimesis, die jedes Kunstwerk sucht, ist stets auch Antezipation eines Zustands jenseits der Spaltung zwischen dem einzelnen und den anderen.' Adorno, *Ästhetische Theorie*, p. 198; *Aesthetic Theory*, p. 131 (trans. modified).

307 'Fortlebende mimesis, die nichtbegriffliche Affinität des subjektiv Hervorgebrachten zu seinem Anderen. . . . bestimmt Kunst als eine Gestalt der Erkenntnis, und insofern ihrerseits als 'rational'. Denn worauf das mimetische Verhalten anspricht, ist das Telos der Erkenntnis, das sie durch ihre eigenen Kategorien zugleich blockiert. Kunst komplettiert Erkenntnis um das von ihr Ausgeschlossene und beeinträchtigt dadurch wiederum den Erkenntnischarakter, ihre Eindeutigkeit.' Adorno, *Ästhetische Theorie*, pp. 86–87; *Aesthetic Theory*, p. 54 (trans. modified).

308 Adorno, *Ästhetische Theorie*, p. 172; *Aesthetic Theory*, p. 113.

309 'geht auf das Transsubjektive, ist die Gestalt des Erkenntnis, welche, wie sie einst der Polarität von Subjekt und Objekt vorherging, so jene als Definitivum nicht anerkennt.' Adorno, *Ästhetische Theorie*, p. 170; *Aesthetic Theory*, p. 111 (trans. modified).

310 'Nachahmung ist Kunst einzig als die eines objektiven, aller Psychologie entrückten Ausdrucks, dessen vielleicht einmal das Sensorium an der Welt inneward und der nirgendwo anders überdauert als in Gebilden.' Adorno, *Ästhetische Theorie*, p. 171; *Aesthetic Theory*, p. 112 (trans. modified).

311 'Die Ausdrucksvaleurs der Kunstwerke sind nicht länger unmittelbar die von Lebendigem. Gebrochen und verwandelt, werden sie zum Ausdruck der Sache selbst . . . Jenes quid pro quo neutralisiert nicht bloß die Mimesis; es folgt auch aus jener. Ahmt das mimetische Verhalten nicht etwas nach, sondern macht sich selbst gleich, so nehmen die Kunstwerke es auf sich, eben das zu vollziehen. Nicht imitieren sie im Ausdruck einzelmenschliche Regungen, vollends nicht die ihrer Autoren; wo sie dadurch wesentlich sich bestimmen, verfallen sie als Abbilder eben der Vergegenständlichung, gegen die der mimetische Impuls sich sträubt. Zugleich vollstreckt sich im künstlerischen Ausdruck das geschichtliche Urteil über Mimesis als ein archaisches Verhalten: daß diese, unmittelbar praktiziert, keine Erkenntnis ist.' Adorno, *Ästhetische Theorie*, p. 169; *Aesthetic Theory*, p. 111 (trans. modified).

312 'der gleichsam physiologischen Vorform des Geistes.' Adorno, *Ästhetische Theorie*, p. 172; *Aesthetic Theory*, p. 113 (trans. modified).

313 Adorno, *Ästhetische Theorie*, p. 174; *Aesthetic Theory*, p. 114 (trans. modified).

314 Adorno, *Ästhetische Theorie*, p. 175; *Aesthetic Theory*, pp. 114–15 (trans. modified).

315 Adorno, *Ästhetische Theorie*, p. 176; *Aesthetic Theory*, p. 115.

316 Adorno, *Ästhetische Theorie*, p. 190; *Aesthetic Theory*, p. 125 (trans. modified).

317 Adorno, *Ästhetische Theorie*, p. 275; *Aesthetic Theory*, p. 184 (trans. modified).

318 On the role of mimesis in the regression to anti-Semitism, see Anson Rabinbach, 'The Cunning of Unreason: Mimesis and the Construction of Anti-Semitism in Horkheimer and Adorno's *Dialectic of Enlightenment*', in Rabinbach, *In the Shadow of Catastrophe: German Intellectuals between Apocalypse and Enlightenment* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1997).

Afterword

1 T. S. Eliot, *Collected Poems, 1909–1962* (London: Faber and Faber, 1974), p. 179.

2 'Die Zeit fault und kreißt zugleich', Ernst Bloch, *Erbschaft dieser Zeit, Werkausgabe* IV (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1985), p. 15.

3 Samuel Weber touches on the relation of Heidegger's and Benjamin's concepts of distraction in 'Mass Mediauras, or: Art, Aura and Media in the Work of Walter Benjamin', in Weber, *Mass Mediauras: Form, Technics, Media* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1996), esp. pp. 91ff. Heidegger is also discussed in the context of Benjamin and Kracauer in Patrice Petro, *Joyless Streets: Women and Melodramatic Representation in Weimar Germany* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1989), pp. 51–57.

4 Meyer Schapiro, 'The Still Life as a Personal Object: A Note on Heidegger and van Gogh' (1968); and 'Further Notes on Heidegger and van Gogh' (1994), both in Schapiro, *Theory and Philosophy of Art: Style, Artist, and Society* (New York: Braziller, 1994). Kurt Bauch was for many years Heidegger's colleague at the University of Freiburg; see Bauch's contribution to the Heidegger Festschrift of 1949: Bauch, 'Die Kunstgeschichte und die heutige Philosophie', in *Martin Heidegger's Einfluß auf die Wissenschaften: Aus Anlaß seines sechzigsten Geburtstages* (Bern: Francke, 1949). Lützeler discusses the impact of Heidegger on his work in 'Wege zur Kunst', in Martina Sitt, ed., *Kunsthistoriker in eigener Sache* (Berlin: Reimer, 1990), pp. 231–32.

5 Martin Heidegger, *Der Begriff der Zeit*, quoted in Charles R. Bambach, *Heidegger, Dilthey, and the Crisis of Historicism* (Ithaca, N. Y.: Cornell University Press, 1995), p. 15.

6 Hans Sedlmayr, 'Die wahre und die falsche Gegenwart', *Merkur* 87, May 1955, 430–49. This essay is reprinted with very few changes as 'Das Problem der Zeit' in Sedlmayr, *Kunst und Wahrheit: Zur Theorie und Methode der Kunstgeschichte* (Hamburg: Rowohlt, 1958). My references will be to the original publication.

7 Sedlmayr, 'Die wahre und die falsche Gegenwart', p. 433.

8 Sedlmayr, 'Die wahre und die falsche Gegenwart', p. 432.

9 Sedlmayr, 'Die wahre und die falsche Gegenwart', p. 436.

10 Sedlmayr, 'Die wahre und die falsche Gegenwart', p. 437.

11 Sedlmayr, 'Die wahre und die falsche Gegenwart', p. 431.

12 Sedlmayr, 'Die wahre und die falsche Gegenwart', p. 442.

13 Sedlmayr, 'Die wahre und die falsche Gegenwart', pp. 448, 442.

14 On Sedlmayr's use of Baader's conception of the 'Mitte', see esp. Norbert Schneider, 'Hans Sedlmayr', in Heinrich Dilly, ed., *Altmeister moderner Kunstgeschichte* (Berlin: Reimer, 1990), p. 276, 287 n. 61. The idea of the 'Mitte' is discussed in the chapter on Baader in Friedrich Kümmel, *Über den Begriff der Zeit* (Tübingen: Max Niemeyer, 1962), esp. pp. 97–100. On *Verlust der Mitte* in general, see Willibald Sauerländer, 'Hans Sedlmayrs *Verlust der Mitte*', in Sauerländer, *Geschichte der Kunst – Gegenwart der Kritik* (Cologne: DuMont, 1999), pp. 229–38.

15 Sedlmayr, 'Die wahre und die falsche Gegenwart', p. 439; Franz von Baader, 'Ueber den Begriff der Zeit', *Sämmtliche Werke* II, *Gesammelte Schriften zur philosophischen Grundwissenschaft oder Metaphysik*, ed. F. Hoffmann (Leipzig: Herrmann Bethmann, 1851), pp. 71–72.

16 Sedlmayr, 'Die wahre und die falsche Gegenwart', p. 441; von Baader, 'Ueber den Begriff der Zeit', p. 74.

17 Sedlmayr, 'Die wahre und die falsche Gegenwart', p. 441; von Baader, 'Ueber den Begriff der Zeit', p. 74n.

18 After his forced retirement of 1945 in the wake of his Nazi past, Sedlmayr wrote extensively for the Catholic journal *Wort und Wahrheit* under the pseudonyms 'Hans Schwarz' and 'Ernst Hermann'. See Schneider, 'Hans Sedlmayr', p. 275.

19 Hans Sedlmayr, *Verlust der Mitte: Die bildende Kunst des 19. und 20. Jahrhunderts als Symbol der Zeit* (Salzburg: Otto Müller, 1948). For Sedlmayr's account of the history of the manuscript, see 'Nachwort', p. 252.

20 Sedlmayr, *Verlust der Mitte*, p. 7. On these matters Sedlmayr was taken to task. Perhaps the most incisive criticism to appear in the scholarly press at the time was a review by Hermann Voss: 'Reading large parts of S[edlmayr]'s account, especially the first chapters . . . feels like reading one of those tracts that we remember only too well from the erst-

while Third Reich: for example, in the . . . passage on Daumier; or when the 'cosmopolitain', the 'homeless and groundless man of the future', the 'creation of abstract fantasy', as S. calls him, is attacked; or when the forerunners of an heroic-authoritarian world-view like Nietzsche, Jünger and especially Spengler are repeatedly invoked as solemn authorities; when the works of notorious Nazi propagandists such as Hubert Schrade are discussed for pages, even verbatim; when even the Schrade's polemic 'Das Deutsche Nationaldenkmal', published to celebrate the tenth anniversary of the death of Schlageter, is granted a lengthy citation. [Paragraph] It is well known that Sedlmayr himself happily marched to Hitler's trumpet – a fact that would not concern us here if the traces were not so clearly recognizable.' Hermann Voss, review of Sedlmayr, *Verlust der Mitte*, Zeitschrift für Kunst IV, 1950, pp. 78–83, here p. 83.

21 Adorno and Sedlmayr had their famously cordial exchange at the Darmstädter Gespräche (Darmstadt Forum) in 1950. See, among other accounts, Jutta Held, 'Adorno und die kunsthistorische Diskussion der Avantgarde vor 1968', in Horst Bredekamp *et al.*, *Frankfurter Schule und Kunstgeschichte* (Berlin: Reimer, 1992), pp. 41–45, and Yule Heibel, *Reconstructing the Subject: Modernist Painting in Western Germany, 1945–1950* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994), pp. 154–56.

22 Benjamin acquired Baader's *Sämmtliche Werke* in 1917. As Gershom Scholem notes, beside Plato's these were the only complete works in Benjamin's library. On Benjamin's interest in Baader, see Scholem, *Walter Benjamin: Die Geschichte einer Freundschaft* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1975), pp. 32-33, 39. Benjamin's only published work specifically concerned with the theologian is an appreciative review of a David Baumgardt's *Franz von Baader und die philosophische Romantik* (Halle a.d. Salle: Niemeyer, 1927): 'Ein Schwarmgeist auf dem Katheder: Franz von Baader', *Gesammelte Schriften* III, pp. 304–308. The only serious discussion of the possible impact of Baader on Benjamin concerns his theory of language: see Reiner Dieckhoff's interesting but somewhat polemical 'Mythos und Moderne: Über die verborgene Mystik in den Schriften Walter Benjamins' (PhD thesis, 1976; Cologne: Janus, 1987), esp. pp. 19–33. When desperately short of money in the late 1920s, Benjamin sold these volumes – the most valuable he owned – to the library of the Hebrew University in Jerusalem through Scholem.

23 Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Truth and Method* (New York: Crossroad, 1975), pp. 108–9.

24 Franz von Baader, 'Zweites Sendschreiben an den Herrn Professor Molitor in Frankfurt', *Sämmtliche Werke* IV, *Gesammelte Schriften zur philosophischen Anthropologie*, ed. F. Hoffmann (Leipzig: Herrmann Bethmann, 1853), p. 357. Benjamin wrote to Scholem about Baader's second letter to Molitor in letters of 25 May and June 1917: see Benjamin, *Gesammelte Briefe* I, ed. Christoph Gödde and Henri Lonitz (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1995), pp. 357, 364. In the first, he notes that 'Baader and Molitor are so closely connected that one of the first things I read was his two important letters to Molitor.' In the second, 'In the same essay, the exploration about time and history on pages 356/357 is well worth considering. I do not yet understand it.' Benjamin's difficulty is perhaps due to Baader's extremely idiosyncratic terminology in these passages. See the helpful discussion in Kümmel, *Über den Begriff der Zeit*, pp. 108–109.

25 Walter Benjamin, 'Über den Begriff der Geschichte', *Gesammelte Schriften* I, p. 702; 'Theses on the Philosophy of History', *Illuminations*, trans. Harry Zohn (New York: Schocken, 1969), p. 262.

26 Walter Benjamin, *Das Passagen-Werk*, *Gesammelte Schriften* V, p. 493; *The Arcades Project*, ed. R. Tiedemann, trans. Howard Eiland and Kevin McLaughlin (Cambridge, Mass.: Belknap/Harvard University Press, 1999), p. 391 [K1a, 6].

27 Benjamin, *Gesammelte Schriften* I, p. 696; *Illuminations*, p. 256.

28 Benjamin, *Gesammelte Schriften* I, p. 702; *Illuminations*, p. 262.

29 Sedlmayr, 'Die wahre und die falsche Gegenwart', p. 445. See Johann Georg Hamann, *Sämtliche Werke* II, ed. Josef Nadler (Vienna: Herder-Verlag, 1949-1957) p. 176. Hamann refers to Ezekiel 31:1-2: 'The hand of the Lord… set me down in the midst of the valley which was full of bones, and caused me to pass by them round about: and, behold, there were many in the open valley; and, lo, they were very dry' (KJV).

30 Benjamin, *Gesammelte Schriften* I, p. 500; *Illuminations*, p. 236.
31 Sedlmayr, 'Die wahre und die falsche Gegenwart', pp. 446–47.
32 Benjamin, *Gesammelte Schriften* II, pp. 203–204; Benjamin, *Reflections*, trans. E. Jephcott (New York: Schocken, 1986), pp. 12–13. On the dating of the fragment – Scholem and Rolf Tiedemann date it from 1920/21, while Adorno and the editors of the English translation see it as written in the winter of 1937/38 – see the editors' comments in *Gesammelte Schriften* II, pp. 946–49.
33 Benjamin, *Gesammelte Schriften* I, p. 694; *Illuminations*, p. 254.
34 Benjamin, *Gesammelte Schriften* I, p. 694; *Illuminations*, p. 255.
35 Benjamin, *Gesammelte Schriften* I, p. 697; *Illuminations*, p. 257.
36 Benjamin, *Gesammelte Schriften* I, p. 701; *Illuminations*, p. 261.
37 Benjamin, *Gesammelte Schriften* I, p. 702; *Illuminations*, p. 262.
38 Benjamin, *Gesammelte Schriften* I, p. 703; *Illuminations*, p. 263.
39 Benjamin, *Gesammelte Schriften* I, p. 701; *Illuminations*, p. 261 (quoting Karl Kraus).
40 Benjamin, *Gesammelte Schriften* I, pp. 701–2; *Illuminations*, pp. 261–62.
41 Benjamin, *Gesammelte Schriften* I, p. 704; *Illuminations*, p. 263.
42 Bergson, of course, figures importantly in 'Some Motifs in Baudelaire' – but only after the intervention of Adorno in the development of the Baudelaire project. His place is more marginal in the notes for the Arcades Project. For a recent argument for the importance of Bergson, see Ansgar Hillach, 'Dialektisches Bild', in *Benjamins Begriffe* I, ed. Michael Opitz and Erdmut Wizisla (Frankfurt am Main: Surhkamp, 2000), pp. 218, 227–28. Heinrich Kaulen argues for the impetus of Heidegger in *Rettung und Destruktion: Untersuchungen zur Hermeneutik Walter Benjamins* (Tübingen: Niemeyer, 1987), pp. 232–33.
43 Leo Löwenthal, 'The Integrity of the Intellectual: In Memory of Walter Benjamin (1982)', in Gary Smith, ed., *Benjamin: Philosophy, Aesthetics, History* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1989), p. 249.
44 Susan Buck-Morss, *The Dialectics of Seeing: Walter Benjamin and the Arcades Project* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1989).
45 The only direct reference to the logical positivists in the work of the 'New Vienna School' around Sedlmayr and Pächt appears in Otto Pächt's admiring invocation of Moritz Schlick's *Allgemeine Erkenntnislehre* in 'Das Ende der Abbildtheorie', *Kritische Berichte* III/IV, 1930/31, p. 1n, reprinted in Pächt, *Methodisches zur kunsthistorischen Praxis*, third edition (Munich: Prestel, 1995), p. 305, n. 1.
46 T. S. Eliot, *Collected Poems, 1909–1962* (London: Faber and Faber, 1974), p. 179.
47 Helmut Lethen, 'Unheimliche Nachbarschaften: Neues vom neusachlichen Jahrzehnt', *Jahrbuch zur Literatur der Weimarer Republik* I, 1995, pp. 76–92.
48 Carl Schmitt, *Political Theology: Four Chapters on the Concept of Sovereignty*, trans. G. Schwab (1922; Cambridge: MIT Press, 1985), chapter one.
49 Benjamin, *Gesammelte Schriften* I, p. 697; *Illuminations*, p. 257.
50 Benjamin, 'Kurze Schatten (II)', *Gesammelte Schriften* IV, p. 425; *Selected Writings II: 1927–1934*, ed. Michael W. Jennings (Cambridge, Mass.: Belknap/Harvard University Press, 1999), p. 699.

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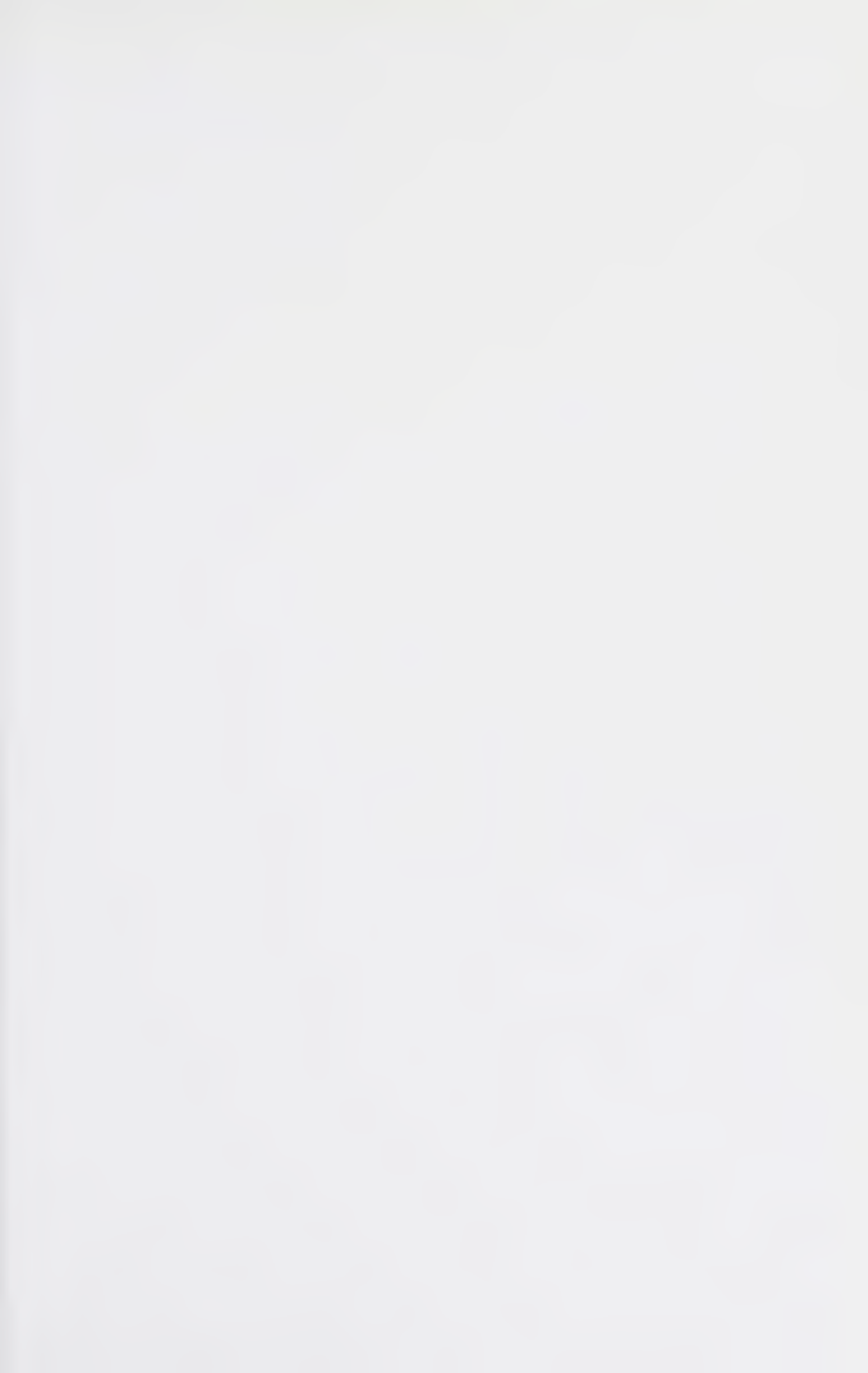

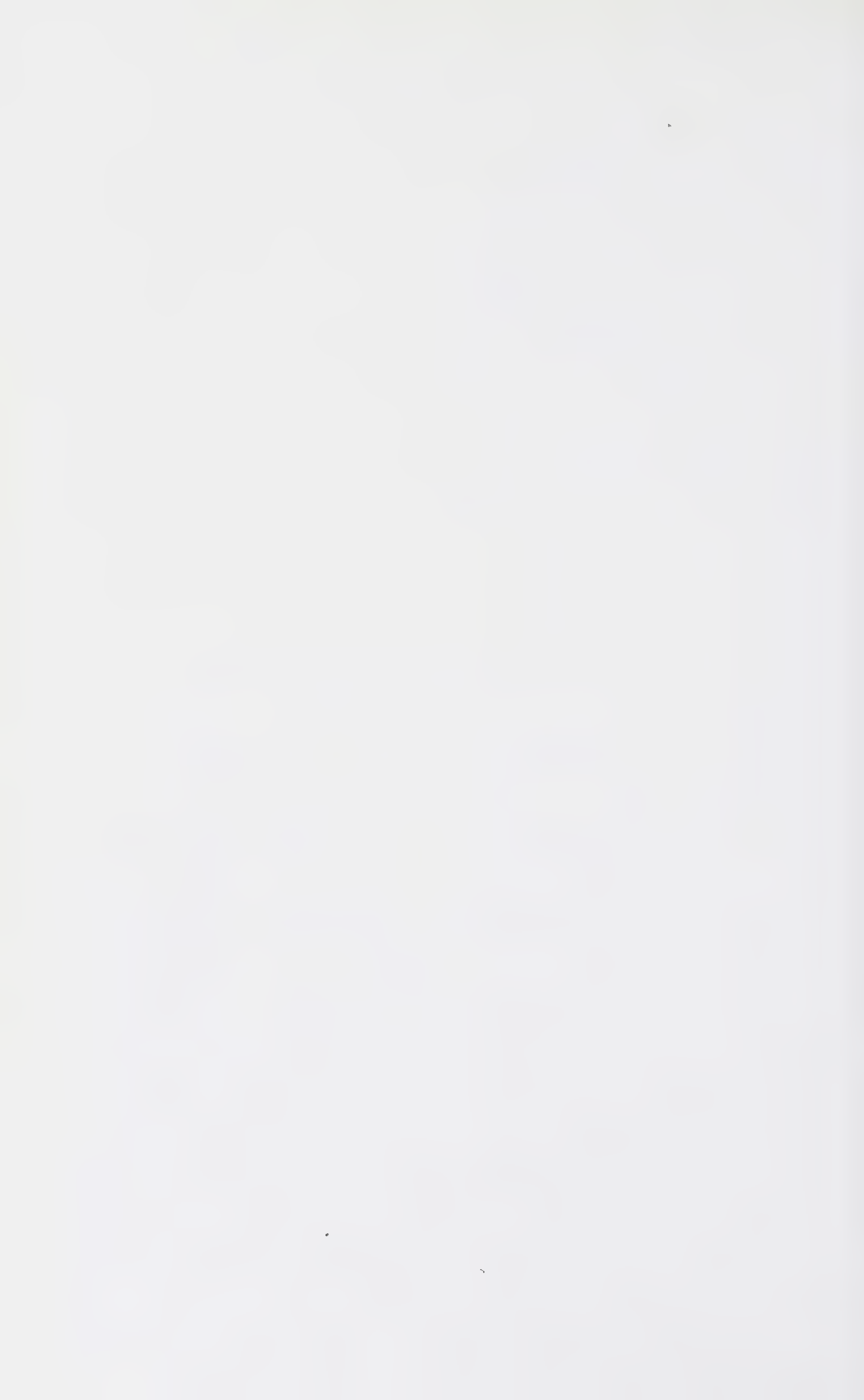

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