

"History of Style" and "History of Language" of Fine Art

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"History of Style" and "History of Language" of Fine Art

A Survey

by

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(trans. Paul McClennan)

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The following reflections of an art historian on a basic problem of his discipline do not suffer from the illusion of suggesting something fundamentally new and conclusive; rather they are in the air, as one tends to say, and have, as far as the first of the two definitions in the title of this essay is concerned, long been formulated even if, especially on German soil, they have only filtered very partially through to general consciousness, least of all inside those narrower borders. As for the second, it has admittedly long been expressed in the separation of literary studies and linguistics and with regard to our "subject" certainly surmised, but hardly ever outlined with full clarity and rigorousness. But the first one also requires a still more precise elucidation as otherwise the danger of a misunderstanding is close at hand, as if it were here a question of so-called "objective" "style of the period", a choice of name which has been conventional for a long time, particularly in the history of architecture, where it can hardly do much more damage. It is, however, a matter of the original, etymological and only genuine meaning of the word *stilus*, the "slate pencil" of the master, his manner, that which the Italians originally understood by "*maniera*". Of that, therefore, which must in the true and only autonomous sense be called "history of art", quite irrespective of whether it is a question of visual or aural art, of architecture and

fine art, of music or poetry, whereby the old delusion, the Lessingian mistake - as Croce calls it - of the "limits" and autonomies of the "arts" and their "genres" must be excluded, although it still reveals itself; it is not even such a long time ago at all that the Munich aesthete Lipps was discussing the "artistic sins of sculpture" and this sanctimonious expression alone is as characteristic as possible of the institution of observation from which it comes. If the reasonable person no longer has - or at least should no longer have - any problem with our first definition, there still in fact remains one to be set and solved with the second. For is there really a "language" of fine art comparable to the language of words, and, if so, how and in what way is a history of this "art-language" conceivable and possible?

To recognise is to experience, or should be, and thus a few words of most personal reflection may here be allowed. It was almost forty years ago that these problems began to bother me and in the course of my approximately equally long academic activity, now nearing its conclusion, I have frequently tried in lectures to make them clear, at first quite naively and imperfectly of course, to myself and to those who wanted to hear me. After all, I came from the positivist age of art history, which - and this was surely a beneficial and in itself necessary set-back - wanted to reject all philosophical, and especially aesthetic, considerations and banish the ominous word "beautiful" altogether, as it reeked really too much of academy and classicism and was also encumbered with all manner of uncertainties; the living, "naturalistic" art of those days played its part as well and it had not been at all so very long ago that a fine mind like Thomas Fechner had wanted to construct an aesthetics "from below"; the satyr play to this had of course in 1871 set up the "plebiscite" on the authenticity of the Dresden Holbein Madonna from which the latter had emerged as the victor over the original in Darmstadt. That the rejection of all philosophical foundation was nonetheless an illusion and indeed at bottom an impossibility, was shown by Leo Spitzer years ago in a study of the rich mind that Hermann Hettner was¹; it is almost tragicomic how the apparently completely banished theory of classicism - admittedly an extremely austere and strictly constructed edifice, hardly shakeable from its own point of view - comes to light wherever the thin plaster of positivism flakes off. As a very young student I had wandered - almost by chance - into the maze of Schellingian philosophy of art but of course in those days not a word of that could be passed on, as the great philosophy of Romanticism had been outlawed, and the university of Vienna, where I was studying, was the last stronghold of Herbartianism - the aesthete Zimmermann and the educationalist Vogt were still alive and teaching then. Of course, the strict formalism of the teaching of the last great German thinker came down in such an ossified form to us youths who, moreover, were at that time still immature Wagner and Bruckner enthusiasts and would have most liked to have burnt Hanslick's - also a Herbartian "formalist" at least when seen from the outside - all too famous and incessantly reprinted little book of the beautiful in music (1856). But some of this aura hung in the air, is even, as I have never doubted, perceptible in the self-willed thought of my friend, Alois Riegl, who was only about eight years older than me and who had grown up in the same atmosphere. All the same there was something here that, more than the upward swing of idealism,

dangerous for young people, could lead us, historians with an excellent "philological" training, from the periphery to the centre of pure art historical contemplation: H. Wölfflin, the Burckhardt pupil, of the same age as us, whose papers could at that time not yet have an effect on us, of course; they first came to the fore when our generation began to reflect upon itself. That was at the turn of the century. Of myself I can only say that I found myself at that time, like Dante six hundred years ago, *nel mezzo del cammin di nostra vita*, in a dark forest from which no way out was visible, though just at that time, at the end of the old and the start of the new century, the once condemned aesthetics displayed a new and veritably rank growth which, however, seemed to make that forest even darker and more impassable. At that time I studied with feverish endeavour those large weighty tomes of the German aestheticians like Lipps, Volkelt, Dessoir and so on but was unable to derive the slightest benefit from them although they were adequately enough adorned with the rags and patches of art historical learning, much less with observation; today they have long been consigned to one of the darkest corners of my library. It was nevertheless typical, however, that among them emerged an art historian, Konrad Lange, who felt the need to deliver his own art-philosophical system in two big volumes, a final and in part fairly naive attempt at an allegedly positivist and naturalistic theory of art, obsolete and out-dated even in its hour of birth (1901).

And then Virgil appeared if, most presumptuously I am to develop the Dantesque image further. At his gentle and kind hand I found the way out of that evil forest in which all manner of fabulous creatures confused eye and ear. At the same time it was the start of a now thirty-year-old intellectual friendship which has even been able to survive the world war. In 1902 the first volume of Benedetto Croce's *The Philosophy of the Spirit, the Estetica come scienza dell'espressione e linguistica generale*, which by now has made a universal impact, appeared in its original version. If it were not tasteless and perhaps also absurd to hound the Dante metaphor to death then I would probably have to say that not long afterwards my *Staius* arose in Karl Voßler, long Croce's close associate; his early writings already provided me with very great inspiration, foremost among them the work on language as creation and development.²

The basic problems of Croce's aesthetics, which he has concisely summarised in exemplary fashion particularly in his *Breviary* of 1913, cannot and need not be recapitulated here; everyone who cares about the eternal phenomenon of art and that which makes up its "history" - the fourth and last volume of Croce's magnum opus is known to be devoted to the problem of history as the "other" side of philosophy in the Kantian a priori synthesis - everyone, then, who cares about this (and this should be first and foremost the art historian) ought to have examined them by now. Croce himself has also repeatedly dealt with the theory and history of the fine arts - notwithstanding his basic conviction of the *ars una*; it is already nearly a decade ago that I attempted to make the most important of these essays accessible to the German art historian⁴, just as I also endeavoured to impart to the German public the

practical applications which he - who was a historian ab ovo anyway, and is one today again to a very great extent - has developed from his basic attitude in aesthetics and made above all in the sphere of poetry, which has been close to his heart from his beginnings; I mean above all the books on Goethe, Dante and the "trilogy", Ariosto-Shakespeare-Corneille, as well as the short essays in the collection Poetry and Non-Poetry. The reason why all this has had hardly any effect beyond a circle of above all my closest pupils may only in part be a result of my own inadequacy and rather be sought at a much deeper level: above all in the gulf between the Latin and the German character where attraction and repulsion seem to balance out much more than is the case with the hostile brothers, the East and West Franconians.

The two closely associated men I have mentioned, whose intellectual steps of fire I could only follow at a laborious distance, completed the decisive step to a new idealism just about 1900 when a complete reversal, indeed a new language became audible and visible in the whole of the art of the time: Voßler's little book on positivism and idealism in linguistics of 1904 already displays this dilemma in the title as a programme, and it is with good reason that the festschrift that friends and pupils dedicated to him on the occasion of his 50th birthday in 1922 appeared under the title New Idealist Philology. Croce, intimately familiar from his youth with German intellectual life and coming from his home-town university of Naples, the last stronghold of Hegelianism (on a completely different scale from that on which Vienna was at the same time the ultimum refugium of Herbartianism), he, who had been the first to revive the memory of one of the great Romantic thinkers, forgotten even by the Germans, Schleiermacher, just as he translated Hegel's Enzyklopädie into his native language - an almost inconceivable achievement for an Italian - he, who at the same time is so deeply rooted in his "Panhellenic" soil that one might almost recognise the features a late-born Ancient Greek in him, in the same soil which has maintained primacy in the philosophical knowledge of all Italy from the days of Thomas Aquinas on, he has at the same time restored to honour two of greatest thinkers and depicors of his southern Italian home, Vico, the magus from the south, and Francesco de Sanctis, who was maltreated by positivism and in the end almost forgotten. It is the spirit of all these really original and creative men which, "sublimated"* in the Hegelian sense of the word and critically purified, experiences a resurrection through his spirit of kindred nature, and simply for this reason it is clear that for him the real and true "history" of all art can mean nothing but the torch race of eminent creative individuals, an insight which flashes up again and again but is almost constantly at once clouded over by rising mists. Therefore it also becomes so perfectly understandable why Croce lays such emphasis on the real, most profound basic problem of all history of art, all "history of style", following the term we used earlier, on the division of "art" and "non-art" as its real shibboleth, and, for the sake of the clarity of the issue, weeds out the uncreative and unoriginal, the imitators, copyists and manufacturers of art from it just as ruthlessly as he does the hybrid, the "orators", who instead find their place - and it may be significant - in completely different spheres to the purely aesthetic. "Beautiful art is the art of the genius": had not old

Kant already expressed that succinctly enough? With the addition, that this "skill" was not communicable but given directly to someone by the hand of Nature and would thus die with him until Nature endowed another person in the same way again. Of course this has always been felt and expressed most strongly by artists themselves especially those whose gift was formative language. (There is a remark made by Liebermann, if I am not mistaken, in circulation which blatantly parodies Kant's words: art is whatever the great artists created.) Schiller, himself one of the great poet-orators and at the same time one of the greatest German philosophers of art, writes to Goethe in 1801, building on the Aristotelian tenet that the principle of all art lies not in the "made" (τῷ ποιουμένῳ) but in the "making person" (τῷ ποιούντι) precisely the "poet", that is, artist:

Anyone who is able to put his state of sensitivity in an object in such a way that this object enables me to pass over into my state of sensitivity, and therefore affects me vividly, I call a poet, a maker; but not every poet is on this account an excellent one by degree. The degree of perfection depends on the wealth, the substance, which he has in himself and as a result depicts outside himself, and on the degree of the necessity which the work exercises.

And further:

There are now several people alive of such great culture that only the excellent satisfies them but who are also unable to bring forth anything that is even good. They cannot make anything; the transition from subject to object is denied them, but this very step makes for me the poet. Likewise there were and are poets enough who can bring forth something good and characteristic but do not reach or, indeed, even set themselves those high standards with their product. Now the latter, I maintain, lack only the artistic degree, the former, however, lack the creative means, and this distinction is now, in my opinion, made too rarely. Hence a useless and irreconcilable dispute between the two whereby art gains nothing. For the former, who take up their position on the vague domain of the Absolute, are forever holding up to their opponents the obscure idea of the Highest whereas the latter have the fact in itself, which is admittedly limited but real. Nothing can come of the idea, however, without the fact.

And Grillparzer writes in 1838: "Whoever cannot express anything that he has set himself to express (regardless of his value as a person or indeed a thinker), is in art a bungler or, putting it mildly, a dilettante."

It is also on this basis that the great Danish archaeologist, Julius Lange, placed the "artistic value" in the value which the object had for the artist and which it could not otherwise have without his mediation. That is the touchstone for art and non-art (which, as I have said, may very well have a different value outside the aesthetic sphere). "We say to the artist: Do not give us what you have from others but what really has life for yourself." Lange's paper was published in the '70's and sank unnoticed

in the high tide of positivism - to which his very different brother, the doctor Karl Lange, also paid homage⁵ - and was forgotten even in his native land; I therefore arranged for its translation into German some time ago.⁶

In all these remarks is already that which a modern aesthete, Jonas Cohn (in one of the very few German books on aesthetics which are useful and worth reading for the historian, despite the flood which started in the 19th century after a long drought)⁷, has very felicitously described as the "insularity" of the work of art; I shall return to the apparent methodical difficulty which this causes the history of art and which is probably in the nature of the aesthetic field, which can only be caught mechanically in "types" and "laws". It is the supremely individual, the unique and irrepeatable, as Kant already hinted; the sea too which laps around that island, its "historical situation" is at every moment a different one, as Heraclitus' saying goes: "You never step into the same river twice." A German poet, admittedly one of the most problematical, Friedrich Hebbel noted in his diary in 1860 with that rigid one-sidedness and extravagance of his: "Would Raphael stop painting if the whole world went blind except for him? Would not the real poet still compose on a desert island and write his verse in the sand even if he spotted the rhinoceros which would obliterate it immediately afterwards?" The fairly droll favourite instrument of Justinus Kerner (as of Romanticism in general), the "jew's harp", might, like the bushman's "musical bow" of which ethnology reports, almost appear as a symbol of expression completely and utterly for its own sake.

Years ago the author, Konrad, hurled his challenge to the above mentioned Th. Lipps at a discussion in Munich: "There's no such thing as art, only artists!" Konrad certainly did not know that many years before him, an Austrian man of letters, now completely forgotten though once highly esteemed, a certain v. Meyern, the author of a much-read novel of education, *Dya-na-Sore*, - F. v. Feuchtersleben edited and published his estate in 1842 - voiced exactly the same idea in exactly the same words⁸:

But actually one should talk in a completely different manner and abandon this false position which now causes so much confusion about everything. To come to the point, there is no such thing as art, only artists, no heroism, only heroes, etc.; all objective logical theories should be substituted by subjective historical or genetic ones...

But this contrast between artists and theoreticians, here coming to light in all its one-sidedness, which nevertheless contains fruitful elements, sometimes also divides naively creative from literarily reflecting artists, of whom the former are in the better position from the start. Thus Whistler says in his talks⁹ that what is essential is the artist himself, he has no connection with his time and its civilisation at all; "art" knows no "progress", virtues increase its value just as little as vices diminish it; in any case art is intended for the individual not the masses. Diametrically opposed to Whistler appears his contemporary,

the sculptor, Adolf Hildebrand, who of course is from the circle of his intellectually and creatively far superior companions, K. Fiedler and H. v. Marées and has also set down his views in writing, admittedly in a laboured and rather clumsy way, in a little book which at the time caused a sensation but also considerably confused many people.¹⁰ "Art" for him is something objective, lying beyond the artist, utterly timeless, living and regulating itself according to fixed "laws". That sort of thing calls to mind the contrast between the "artistic will" of the Romantic Rumohr and A. Riegl's objectified "will-to-form", which strives out of materialism and seems to contain something of the old "nisus formativus".

Between these biases of the aestheticist and the logicist position there can be in the case of broken a priori synthesis i.e. of philosophical and historical judgement, no fusion, only unclean contamination; and as a matter of fact that seems to be the state of today's "history of art" as well. It is most remarkable that Italian art historiography, the oldest kind and the prototype of all others down to German Romanticism represents the development in its purest form. The line starts with Ghiberti, the great creative artist for whom the artist merges completely with his work as he himself does as an empirical figure in his autobiography, the first by a fine artist that we possess, so that we have here the first attempt at a real "history of style", albeit in rudimentary form. It then goes on to Vasari: also an artist but already very strongly affected and distracted by the academic and literary world, in whose *Vite* the empirical figure of the artist, as Florentine anecdote had early on grasped it, overshadows, if it does not push into the background, the artistic one, in complete contrast to Ghiberti, so that here too the ground is prepared for an at first naive rationalist "psychology of the artist", which continues to have an effect even now in the "explanation" of the "stylistic" out of the empirical life of the artist and vice versa. The "objective" history of style in humanist guise (only hinted at in Ghiberti's case) takes up a good deal of space and is revealed in the external periodisation of the work even if, formally, it ends eschatologically, especially in the first edition of 1550, in the apotheosis of a single larger-than-life artist figure, the "divine" Michelangelo, as the conclusion of all development of art altogether. Finally Bellori, no longer an artist but a genuine representative of his learned seicento, leads in his *Vite*, constructed no longer nationally but rather internationally in a Roman way, back to the synthesis of philosophy and history, which is of course here "double-track" and thus only apparently completed, with the famous introductory dissertation on the "Idea of the Beautiful", the legacy of classicism. From Bellori comes the road to the immortal magnum opus of the German Winckelmann (likewise written on Italian soil), also a learned historian and antiquary by origin, which describes itself as a "doctrinal system".¹¹

What then does "history of art" or (in the version which we have chosen for precise reasons) "history of style" mean in the subjective, internal, and only autonomous sense of the word, rather than the "objective", trivialised and acquired one. To answer this question, the historian, if he does not want to fall into the naive agnosticism of those artists mentioned earlier, must stand on the firm base of a philosophical definition of the nature of all art as was still the case with Bellori and classicism with its

strictly formulated system of dogma, whereas Romanticism, for all its rich insights, drifted off into vagueness and digression. The answer, which Croce has given, has been the subject of a good deal of opposition, misunderstanding and disparagement, but has never been seriously disproved. Art as the sole object of aesthetic knowledge is the first and fundamental category of the theoretical, contemplating sphere of the spirit prior to and next to the logical one, corresponding to the two others of the practical, active sphere, the economic and the ethical. This is not a matter of Herbart's bloodless "ideas" which float in another world far removed from all the senses, but of the vivid, breathing reality which makes this world of ours in which we all live and breathe. Art is pure ("lyrical") intuition* which has become expression, both things indissolubly and indivisibly fused with one another; any attempt to separate them leads irretrievably to dualism and all its consequences whether in the aesthetics of "content" of Romanticism or in the aesthetics of "form" as embodied most impressively and effectively by Herbart.

If we take this view then the answer to the opening question, as Croce again has given in theory and in practice, is inescapable right down to the utmost consequences. What is history of style, then, and what is it not, what can it not be. It is a matter of the "biography", that is, the internal (not external) history of the "insular" creative monad, as old Ghiberti already suspected, immediately misunderstood by his much more influential (until now) successor, Vasari, the real "father" of European art history more in a bad sense than in a good one; admittedly of a monad from which, unlike that of Leibnitz, wide open doors and windows lead into the environment which makes it shine and ring, a matter of the "style" in the proper and genuine sense of the word. It is thus a matter of the inner nature of this monad, of its "development", not even of the empirical person and his culture combined in its name, a phenomenon which first emerged in individualistic Italy, mostly from the "side of the impression" of the lay public, even before Dante and then strongly stimulated by his personality itself. Biographically "anonymous" and artistically "anonymous" (i.e. non-artistic) are two very different things, as Croce has long since demonstrated; the first one can be present without doing the artistic nature any harm, as is the case with the master builder of the medieval stonemason's lodge, the artistic structure of which is still so difficult for us to comprehend; the second one can exist even in the work of the master who stands before us in full historical plasticity, as witty old Fontenelle joked about Corneille's Agesilas: *il faut croire, qu'il est de M. Corneille, parce que son nom y est* (after Croce). Of course the example of architecture in particular in that very lay public of our days as well teaches us how easily the name falls off the artwork.

But with that the artwork has only apparently become anonymous; the *ἰσοέωρον ζῶον*, as Arrian's Epictetus so nicely calls the human being, sticks to the "image" and means the "representation". "The very thing which strikes uneducated people as being nature not nature (from without) but the person (nature from within)", Goethe once said. One of the most sensitive German publicists, K.

Hillebrand depicted this apparent fading-away and becoming-unrecognisable of the person of the artist very well:

in this way the childhood of nations is repeated in the childhood of every individual: the names of the poets of all our great popular epics have remained unknown only because the fascination of the tale for the imagination was so great that one completely lost sight of the teller. If there is a single work of which this can be said then surely it is Robinson Crusoe. There is probably not a single child who knows the name Defoe or would care to know it.¹²

Here, then, is the point where artistic expression turns into (social) impression, its inversion brought about by the "layman". We are approaching the problem of linguistic communication which we are to consider shortly. The above mentioned J. Cohn has rightly emphasised that in art the "communication" and the element of the public resulting from it, is, and remains, quite secondary even if it is necessarily and inseparably intertwined with the primary expression: as listening, for example, goes together with "speaking" and reading with writing, even if it is connected with the expressing, creating individual alone, as was the case with the jew's harp player mentioned earlier or Hebbel's poet on the desert island. The genuine great artist is as an artist sufficient unto himself, himself "audience", and neither requires nor thinks of any other. In his very last works, the purely transcendental piano and violoncello sonatas, the quartets, Beethoven abandoned almost entirely the connection with the audience, with the interpreter as well, one might almost say, and with his "damned" instrument, he is the pure absolute artist like the late Rembrandt, who only "speaks" to himself, as the demiurge in whose image the Renaissance so liked to emphasise the "divine" nature of his creative power; this lives on in our everyday language in a state of the utmost deterioration and triviality when it is said that some mime has "created" a role or when a primadonna is described as a "diva": a not uncommon linguistic phenomenon of downgrading (or upgrading) of the original meaning of a word.

This standpoint of the "layman", who blithely puts his "impression" in place of the expression of the creative artist-monad, has been depicted by no-one more naively and typically than by Zelter -in whom there was a rough piece of artistry all his practical good sense notwithstanding - in a letter to Goethe (1820):

I must be allowed to appropriate a part of it (i.e. of a poem) to make it completely mine. What is the poet to me! His word is a pitched stone, which I pick up, and how I look at it, recognize and use it is my business. And if he wants to be alive and if he has otherwise found me as I him then his word is printed and remains his even if he has to stand from so many for what they can give him.

In the following year Goethe resumes full of wisdom to his naive and devoted friend, that it is a matter of two parties, two kinds of idea which are feuding with one another: "We are fighting for the perfection

of a work of art in itself, they are thinking of its effect on the outside world with which the true artist does not concern himself, just like Nature when it creates a lion or a hummingbird", which is followed by the reference to Kant's distinction between the Beautiful in Nature and the Beautiful in Art, the "beautiful object" and the "beautiful depiction of an object", the distinction already familiar to Greek antiquity as *χαλ_ν* and *χαλω μιμεισ'αι*.

It is again Goethe who is content to describe the "lay standpoint" in a few places of his *Wilhelm Meister (Bekenntnisse einer schönen Seele [Confessions of a Beautiful Soul])*: " I was used to looking at a picture or copperplate merely as at the letters of a book; fine printing may well please the eye, but who would read a book for the beauty of the printing? In the same way a pictorial depiction was to tell me something, instruct, affect, improve me;" and furthermore the words of the Abbé in the *Wanderjahre [Travels]*:

How difficult it is, although it seems so natural, to contemplate a good nature, a fine painting in itself, to listen to the song for the song's sake, to admire the actor in the actor and to take pleasure in a building for the sake of its own harmony and durability. Usually, however, one sees people treating what are definitely works of art just as if they were soft clay. The polished marble is to mould itself again, the firm-walled building is to contract or expand itself according to their inclinations, opinions and whims, a painting is to instruct, a play improve and everything become everything. But really, because most people are themselves formless, because they cannot give themselves any shape from their essence itself, they strive to take away from other objects their shape so that everything becomes loose and disjointed matter, of which they too are part. In the end they reduce everything to the so-called effect, everything is relative, and then everything becomes relative, except nonsense and fatuousness, which consequently reigns supreme.

To which Jarno replies:

I can't possibly be so harsh with people, the poor devils. Of course I know enough of them who, beside the greatest works of art and Nature, at once recall their own most miserable needs, take their conscience and morals with them into the opera and do not discard their love and hate in looking at a colonnade, and the best and greatest that can be brought to them from without, they must as far as possible diminish it in their way of representing it to themselves, in order to combine it in any way with their own wretched nature.

As one sees, the three demands, the intellectualist, the hedonist and the moralistic, which have been made on art so often since antiquity and which have smuggled so many "non-" or, at best, semi-artists and artworks into art criticism and art history precisely because their true idea had been obscured. How does one of Goethes Venetian Epigrams go: "Oh, those tender hearts! An amateur can touch them"?

Which Hebbel expresses in a similar way: "Your picture brings tears to my eyes, you heavenly painter. But is that alright with you? People who cry cannot see."

What, then, can alone find its way into the "history of style" as it is here understood?¹³ The aesthetician Schleiermacher¹⁴, who was wrongly forgotten for so long and first restored to honour by Croce, had the important idea of wanting to replace the "Beautiful in Art", which had been misunderstood so often and obscured by those extra-aesthetic concepts just mentioned, with "artistic perfection" as the central concept of all criticism and history.

If, accordingly, the sole and exclusive theme of all history of style can only be the creator and bearer of this "perfection" whether his name and circumstances are known or whether he cannot be named, then it necessarily results from this - and here Whistler is right in spite of all exaggeration - that the "past history" of this monad, its "schooling", is basically just a little part of its inner nature, its true "history", as its "later history", its effect on others, its "influence" and its (often so changeable) "posthumous reputation", i.e. to consciously overstate the case, neither the "teachers" nor the "pupils", of whom, in the case of the really great and prominent masters, the former tend to be of even less importance than the latter, not only with a man like Michelangelo who "learnt" a thing or two from kindred spirits like Donatello and Quercia rather than from the worthy master of his apprentice years, Bertoldo. The saying that Michelangelo "donatellises" just as Donatello "buonarottises", modelled, by the way, on the ancient aperçu about the "platonising" Aristotle, crops up even in the late Renaissance in the works of Raphael Borghini. But even in one who, like Mozart, can take in and assimilate so easily and quickly, the individual physiognomy is clear and unmistakable even in the earliest days; in this way Grillparzer coined the famous phrase about the friend of his youth: "Schubert is my name, Schubert I am and as such I behave." And through Vasari a curious saying of his hero Michelangelo has come down to us which for once does not sound apocryphal: "The artist can only be surpassed by himself"; and the concetto of his eulogist and funeral orator, Benedetto Varchi, on the "infallibility" of the real artist, sounds like an echo of this statement, though rhetorically exaggerated and dogmatised of course. For the only real pupil is the one who overcomes the master, "sublimates" him within himself, in the double meaning of the Hegel word.* That is why all the "influence theories" are empty shells, although they have long been a popular and overworked subject of external history of literature and history of art, because it is easier, more convenient and also more profitable to answer the question of effect than that of the nature of the artistic, a question which engages the mind far more than its - opposite. It is certainly commendable to search for the "sources" of a great literary work as Pio Rajna has done in a well-known book on Ariosto, for example, or Croce himself in a brilliant essay on his close compatriot d'Annunzio. But that is philology, "low" criticism and for that very reason indispensable. But here the problem of higher criticism, which is also the true (philosophical) history is just beginning. For it is the What that matters, not the How; the "history of the artist" in the highest sense, not the deteriorated and

externalised* kind, following Vasari's fateful example, not the raw material of "influences" and "appropriations" in which popular art history so likes to absorb itself, in spite of all its high-flown gestures and pretensions. Goethe once joked about these "influences" that it was as if one were to work out the number of calves which a strong man had eaten in his life and attempt to "explain" his strength on that basis.

What really has to have a place in such a history of style, however, what proves to be really beneficial, is the history of the criticism of the personality of the artist. Not of course in the sense of that ill-advised, "comparative" history of art which, in adhering to the institution of markers and judges of art, endeavoured to bring out from norms and rules the weaknesses rather than the merits without considering that the apparent merits of one artistic nature can very well constitute the "mistakes" of another, thus that Ghiberti, for example, could never have been Donatello, the alleged "rival" to whom he is so often and almost always inaccurately compared, thus that the judgement of quality which is passed in such a manner is bound to fail. The very absence of this wrongly qualitative assessment, [and the presence of] the gaze constantly directed at the artistic nature in itself was what so pleased the intelligent Mme. de Stael about Friedrich Schlegel's Wiener Vorlesungen [Vienna lectures]. And had not one of the most committed pioneers in the fight against the mannerist institution of rules and pedantry of his time, the great Neapolitan, Giordano Bruno, already said (in his famous dialogue, *Degli eroici furori* of 1588) what the finest artist-critic of the 19th century, Gustave Flaubert then repeated in a different form, namely, that the "rules" resulted from the works, that there were therefore as many rules as there were true artists? This is not to give pure subjective arbitrariness free rein, as is so often the case with today's moderns of all "isms" who are unwilling to acknowledge any "leader" because they only feel secure in the fold of their herd instinct; it is rather here too a matter of the basic problem of "artistic perfection" in Schleiermacher's and Croce's sense. Only here does that truly fruitful "comparing" begin which is found in naively primitive form in that *concetto* of Borghini's (he was probably not quite fully aware of the fact), that dialogue (battle of minds as well, probably) between the "natural geniuses" across the centuries, as depicted in Schopenhauer's fine simile of the intellectual conversations of the heroes from peak to peak, above the noise of everyday life in the valleys below. Although it has to do with the problems of philosophers, the passage in one of the most splendid depictions of history, the historical section of Goethe's *Farbenlehre* [Theory of Colours] is nonetheless aimed in our direction when he says: "How diligently he (meaning Kepler) points to the only beautiful axiom which alone can make history pleasant: that the great people of all times proclaim each other in advance and prepare for each other. How long-windedly and willingly does Kepler show that Euclid copernicises." And in one of the very few historical aperçus which have come down to us from the massive fragment of his thought, Leonardo has Massaccio follow the great void which arises around Giotto, like a reincarnation of the great artistic genius of the trecento. What was achieved over long periods of time by aesthetic criticism, however, almost always on wrong tracks and circuitous routes, is not just historical curiosity, not just a

mirror of the time - that is another story -but, in spite of everything, clarification and purification of the recognition of the nature of the artist itself as the basis of all real "history" in this special field, even if this [clarification and purification] has often progressed in dialectical antitheses.

Croce has long since explained insistently and convincingly that the internal rather than the external literary form of all "history of style" can only be the monograph, the essay, which ensues almost automatically from what has previously been discussed. Francesco de Sanctis' literary history, which was given new life by Croce, is also contained in this form even if it is modified by considerations imposed upon it from outside¹⁵, and this principle emerges more or less recognisably in all the depictions worthy of the name. For since it is always a matter of the internal history of the artistic monad in these cases, and only of this, the falsely causal connection with other individuals, which not uncommonly is still reminiscent of Vasari's pragmatism and which is nevertheless striven for in vain - their correctly understood "comparison" is something completely different - , by necessity leaves the field of expression and goes into that of impression, of the social communication, in short of language, moves from the centre to the periphery and ceases to be autonomous. At the end of his life, Tolstoy, who for all his surly moralizing nevertheless remained an artist, explained to a French journalist: "Geniuses are entirely independent of one another. Spare me the attempts to `explain' Flaubert from Balzac" (after Croce). There is much that is part of the great oversized field of aesthetic expression in itself, which encompasses all art and it alone, from its most primitive stages on, - art is creative long before it becomes beautiful, Goethe is known to have said in the terminology of his age - that cannot and must not find inclusion in the history of style χ . ϵ . not only for economic reasons but essentially for internal reasons of its nature. This ranges from the most primitive folk song¹⁶ and folk ornament, indeed even the most "unsophisticated" love letter of a cook which is nonetheless "art" in essence, to the greatest works of philosophers, researchers, orators and historians on the one hand, which differ in kind, to the products of illustrators, for instance, and of the composers of popular dances and songs on the other, which differ in degree. All these things somehow have a part in the sphere of aesthetic expression by virtue of their "linguistic" form - in the broadest sense of the word! -without that being their most essential aspect, which can instead be in other likewise autonomous spheres of the spirit, the logical, ethical or economic. This necessary selection has thus always been made, often instinctively, rarely, however, on the basis of fixed concepts of philosophical reason. Let us take a close look at the commendable work of a fine man, K. Woermann's *Geschichte der Kunst* [History of Art], with this in mind: history in the true autonomous sense of the history of style mingles here with history in the nature of a chronicle, of annals, with compilation as befits reference books, handbooks, not least dictionaries of artists, which can all be extremely useful in themselves but have absolutely nothing to do with philosophical-historical criticism¹⁷ (in the original meaning of the word). At least here the unity of the personality of the author is preserved; things get really bad when a number of "experts" of most varying attitude and intellectuality take control of the matter, in line with the modern practice of the "division of

labour". However valuable individual parts may be, the whole thing sounds cacophonous, like the overzealous tuning-up in the orchestra before the performance of the expected piece of music: any inner unity is lacking, a unity which was characteristic, however, of the old "universal history", now dead, the works of Kugler, Schnaase, even Springer, which were all based on the great system of thought of Romantic philosophy, even including its aberration, the philosophy of history, or at least stemmed from it. Justi's splendid work on Velasquez may well be a "monograph" but the artistic essence of the great painter - to whom the author has otherwise rendered lasting service - almost shrinks up before the overpowering, masterfully depicted background of his age; it is not a "style-historical" monograph but a culture-historical one, or, as one today prefers to say, for reasons of an antipathy, to some extent understandable, towards the degeneration of this approach, one of the "history of ideas", less tolerable in this special aesthetic sphere than in Justi's magnum opus, *Winckelmann und seine Zeit* [Winckelmann and his Age]. The Giotto of Friedrich Rintelen (first published in 1911), who died much too soon, on the other hand, seems to me a classic example from recent times of a style-historical depiction, as does the Italian Roberto Longhi's book on Piero della Franesca (1928), both of which have at the same time the most thoroughly historico- philological foundations. The former contrasts most sharply (and characteristically) with E. Rosenthal's book of the same name in which the Heros Eponymos drowns helplessly in the reflections of history of ideas, (which are drawn from second-hand if not third-hand sources, as usual).¹⁸ H. Wölfflin's *Dürer* book must then also be mentioned, as a peak towering in splendid isolation, a book which he has given not only to us Germans, outshining even as a literary achievement the above scholarly works, crystal clear in content and in diction, appearing slightly cool in its chaste reserve, and disclosing itself only to the devoted reader: a work which can only seemingly be accused of formalism, because it is wholly tailored to the artistic essence, the "style-historical" in the most elevated sense, refraining in wise restraint from the merely biographical as from all wanting-to-explain, in the manner of history of ideas; I would not know what could be set beside it from the whole field of recent art history, which is very much lacking in works of this kind anyway.

There has been a great hue and cry about the (apparently) "fragmentary" and "unsystematic" nature of this history of style understood in this way. This has come from those who have been unable to grasp the internal structure of such history. That hermaphroditic creature, so-called "sociology", hybrid even in name, sticks out its ass's ears here: the schematisation of facts, which are always concrete and individual, in types and norms of an utterly abstract "event", in "laws" which in the end almost always prove to be commonplaces. Even the name, derived from the sphere of law where it is altogether appropriate, belonging to the practical side of the spirit, is bound to arouse misgiving: it also has to do with a residuum of that conception which wanted to utilise the arts for the completely different (and there legitimate) classifying methods, the "pseudo-concepts" of natural science. Even the famous and notorious "phonetic laws" of linguistics, which have today been jettisoned, sprung forth from this soil. Today, when the great masters of the natural sciences have long had a suspicious and cautious attitude

towards the concept of the "law of nature", likewise towards that of "constant development", it is very surprising that such fine and shrewd minds among the art historians as F. Kugler and C. Justi, who admittedly had a good philosophical training as well, should have resisted this conception quite early on and have foreseen the concept of "mutation" - *natura facit saltus* - as was then first put forward by the botanist de Vries.

The matter also really is such that the autonomy of all true history of art, i.e. of style, is lost if the individual thing is dissolved into the universal or rather the abstract, the subject of the judgement turned into the predicate. The microcosm carries the macrocosm within itself; Rembrandt does not appear "as art", but art "as Rembrandt" - and in this respect those from the camp of the creative in practice who deny "art" are right. Giotto is not to be understood as an "expression of his time" (Rosenthal), but his time "as Giotto" (Rintelen); otherwise one invariably ends up in the "sociological" maze: art as an "expression of the society", no longer autonomous but as a document, in service, as in the works of Brandes or Taine; with accurate wit Julius Lange said of the latter's otherwise so shrewd and intelligent mind, far surpassing that of his Danish compatriot: he could not see the trees for the wood. History of art is engulfed by the "history of ideas" (although this expression is basically a tautology if also a more pompous sounding one than the simple old one of history of culture); the abstraction has violated the individual thing i.e. the genuinely historical. What was individual "expression" in the proper and only sense has by this process become the inexpressive in itself: become "expression" which no longer is "expression" because it has been stripped away from the individual and thereby destroyed, an contradiction in terms, as can be seen in the fallacy of "objective style".

If the latter objection [that true history of style is unsystematic] therefore collapses, the other one, that of incoherence, seems, only at first glance of course, to carry more weight: the background, which "holds together" the individual phenomena, is said to be lacking. To which Croce once replied with the caustic wit which is characteristic of him: this call for background merely recalls the gallery wall on which the pictures hang; this [wall] produces a "unity" just as external as the outer literary form of the book in which the essays are collected. Here again it is a matter of the internal form; this yearned-for "ground" is present, only not "in back of"* the work of art, but contained within it, whereby mention may once again be made to the stylistic problem of Giotto, which has only just been touched on.

It would be much weightier than such pedantic brooding, however, if one were to refer to the history of philosophy (or of history); as, for example, Croce himself has, in a well-ordered way, made the historical parts of his *Philosophy of Spirit*, linked with the systematic exposition in an organic way, come after this: the history of the problems itself**, with the inclusion of the illusory problems which have so frequently confused it. It is, after all, quite a long time ago that a profound natural scientist like Ernst Mach said (in his history of heat theory): "An opinion, the evolution of which we know, is familiar

to us like an opinion acquired by consciousness itself and is only explicable in its development" - whereby reference need not again be made to the classic example of the "historical" part of Goethe's *Farbenlehre* [Theory of Colours]. This look at the history of a problem is all the more important because Croce in his origins as a local historian of his home - where he has returned often and with pleasure all his life, by the way - let himself be tempted by a will-o'-the-wisp: the old illusory problem of history as art. If this view was correct - Croce has himself put it right in the course of his long brain-work - then it would give rise to a superfoetation: history of style would be for its part art - which it no doubt is or at least can be as far as its linguistic and literary expression is concerned. But that is not its essence; for its very object, the artistic, belongs not in the logical, but in the aesthetic sphere. The basic problem we are dealing with here is also that of True and False, but in a different sense, of the artistically True and Genuine, i.e. Perfect ("Beautiful") versus the artistically False, i.e. Imperfect, belonging wholly or partly in other spheres of the spirit ("Ugly"); it was a *contradictio in adjecto* when Hegel's successors hit upon the idea of an "aesthetics" of the "Ugly". Schopenhauer has already expressed this when he says: "The intuition† is sufficient unto itself, therefore whatever has arisen purely from it and has remained true to it, like the great work of art, can never be false nor be refuted by any age, for it gives not an opinion but the thing itself." (W. I, 8) It is at this that a saying that surfaces in F. A. Lange's unsurpassable depiction of the history of materialism is directed: "Who would refute a mass by Palestrina or accuse a Madonna by Raphael of a mistake?"; which is nevertheless what the "judges of art" and art-clerics of all eras have done and still do when they even have the nerve to speak of "artistic sins" (see above).

Nevertheless, is not history of philosophy just as much linked to the succession of original, creative monads of thinkers, not of the imitators, however, of the "schools", which can in no way claim a place in it? Does not every creative mind have just as much his particular problem or main problems which he deals with just as originally as the great artist? Is that not once again old Lucretius' "torch race" in which the torches of the "problems" are passed from hand to hand, which thus constitutes the "coherence" in the history of philosophical knowledge, be it in the sense of continuous "evolution" or "mutation" by leaps and bounds, an absolute progress, as a former age held, or of an immanent progress to which our present era tends? The former position was taken by Vasari, who, as a conscious epigone, has the highpoint end in the regress of decadence after M. Angelo; the extremely ambiguous problem of decline surfaces, which had long been established by Italian humanism for the so-called Gothic Middle Ages as regards the first national high period and which is renewed again in classicism for the "Barocco". W. Gurlitt has pointed out only recently in a very readable essay that the youngest of all the so-called sciences of art [Kunstwissenschaften], the history of music, is even today adhering for the most part to that position of absolute progress, which, incidentally, is also true of the history of fine art. Even a man like A. Riegl, in his first great work the *Stilfragen* [Questions of Style], still expressed the view that the role of bearer of the "evolution" had since late antiquity increasingly been falling to

painting which was more "capable of development", instead of to sculpture, as had previously been the case.

Of course, history of philosophy is certainly not, as shallow wits have claimed every now and then, a collection of the mistakes of the human mind in which every (closed) system, passing itself off as the right one, negates and cancels* those preceding or running parallel to it, like an eternal carpet-weaver Penelope, but the incomparably deeper double meaning of the last word ["aufheben"] which Hegel - himself a great historian - bestowed upon it and which we could already employ on the history of the (higher) criticism of art, comes in again here. Every thinker, if he is really a "creator", works on his own problems belonging to his inner nature; in this respect he seems to resemble the creative artist, who cannot drag his "problems" along like dead matter but must experience them as immediate, in that they, his historical inheritance, are "suspended"* within him, i.e. are overcome and recast in accordance with his purpose and his mission. Through this something is actually produced which is new and which for that very reason continues to be effective. Therefore there can never be a "closed" i.e. final system - because that would mean stagnation and death. That sort of thing is accessible and allowed only to revealed religion; here the dualism between divine and human, between believing and knowing gapes, the dualism which so preoccupied medieval scholasticism, and to which fine art has also borne witness in its own way. Only the "open" system, which Croce has brilliantly explained and defended, not just as valid for his particular thinking, is possible in philosophy as in art - otherwise one immediately falls under the influence not of the "classical", but rather of the "classicist".

But it is with good reason that the expression: problem, as soon as it was a question of artistic matters, was put in inverted commas; is it not, like "law" from the ethical sphere of the spirit, a transposition, or rather an acquisition from the logical one, and basically only allowed in the latter? Otherwise there is the risk of it becoming a figure of speech, as is so often the case, which is then suddenly hypostatized. The question is worth serious consideration since it touches on the basic problem of all history of style, but we are of the opinion that it has already been answered by two important writers: "aesthetic" truth is something fundamentally different to logical truth; and the artistic "problem" cannot be passed on to a different person from its originator: this is where the saying of Michelangelo quoted earlier gains its profound meaning. For at the moment when it [the problem] is detached from the latter [the creator], when individual expression loses this property, becomes by the process of abstraction inexpressive (one almost feels reminded of Lichtenberg's joke about the knife without handle or blade), a dead anatomical preparation of "objective style", then it of necessity ceases to be the object of history of style χ . ϵ . . The question of whether it can enter a different field and be effective there will be a matter for further discussion. It is without doubt a contradiction in terms to claim within the former [sphere of history of style] that Titian's "historical" significance lies in the fact that he "continued" and "perfected" the "chromatic" problem of a man like Giorgion, perhaps even led it down back roads and wrong tracks,

or Rembrandt the chiaroscuro of a man like Leonardo, which has also been said although it is nonsense. That is comparative history of art, the wrong kind, which can likewise be seen and in an even worse way in the so-called "history of themes" (the theme of "Faust" in the history of literature, the "Madonna" or "putto" in art etc.), and which again Croce in particular has pursued with biting sarcasm. The apparently so natural parallel with the history of a problem in philosophy - embodied in the splendid account of this theme in an important work by Windelband, for instance - is thus false; a fine mind like Jean Paul has rightly warned in his *Vorschule der Ästhetik* against parallels taken from areas far removed from one another, however evident they may at first look: a criticism which the modern intellectual-historical portrayals as well as the forcible transpositions of H. Wölfflin's categories of vision onto literary history, for example, which Voßler in particular has rightly received with much scepticism, cannot be spared. With that, however, we have reached the threshold of our second question to which we referred at the start: how and in what way is a treatment of these problems, which within the history of style are only illusory problems, conceivable? That is to say: is there a history of language of fine art and how would it have to be composed?

It is necessary to go somewhat further afield for the time being. On the title page of Croce's *Ästhetik* next to the one subtitle: "as science of pure expression" there is the other: *linguistica generale*, as "general linguistics". This was at first understood either wrongly or not at all. I do believe that I was the first German art historian to have referred to this important book (in a contribution to the *festschrift* for Wickhoff in 1903), from which I was to learn so much more. The *conceito* had of course already been touched upon earlier; in the works of D'Agincourt, for example, who was probably also the first to have the idea of the language of art; and even if Quatremère de Quincy's observation about art being a "langue sensible" could still be taken for a simile, Hermann Hettner put it quite unambiguously: "Art is language, nothing but language, though not in words of course." It is universally known that the "language of words" is not the only one in existence although it is a priori given the name "language"; that which one tends to call "body language" and which has quite often been treated from the psychological point of view (in Wundt's *Völkerpsychologie* [Psychology of the Peoples] for example) leads as "plastically" depicting language and "picture-writing" directly to the field of dance and mime and with that across to "fine" art. All "origin" of language - not in the sense of an historical illusory problem in itself impossible, since it is there a matter of an original phenomenon which arises just as much at each moment today as thousands of years ago - lies in the self-liberating expression of the human being, even in the articulated cry, the "interjection". For that reason language is art, as art is language, to be treated never as a logical problem but always as an aesthetic one; Croce once demonstrated this by means of a drastic example, the phrase: "This round table is square."¹⁹ And it is for this reason that he made that addition, "*Linguistica generale*", to the title of his *Ästhetik*, an addition which amazed the uninitiated at first but only them. But as all intuition* which has become expression i.e. art, is converted into impression, it leads via the problem of individual creation as the necessarily

primary element on to the secondary one, that of the other (even if this happens to be the creator himself), of the audience, the listener, reader, spectator, in short of the (social) communication, the development, as Karl Voßler has called it in his extremely enlightening short work mentioned above, *Sprache als Schöpfung und Entwicklung*, in an at first likewise strange sense, perhaps, the deeper meaning of which will immediately become evident. For all linguistic heritage is at first autonomous, creative, expressive i.e. fundamentally artistic formation by the individual: but it enters the stream of the time of those who are speaking there. Much of it sinks at once or later, just as much, however, is carried along, changed in diverse ways, worn down in character, often beyond recognition, like the small change in circulation, again by the activity of individuals in the polyp bed of the language community, is integrated into new linguistic coinages so that, but always in new mutations - a term appropriate here like few others - , a common language, conditioned by time, space and national ethos, grows up which is in incessant "development". The "creation" of the individual is thus uninterruptedly at work in this process, is thus the artistic element; but it blends into the total body of the nationally determined language or of its "dialects", as the collective nature of the medieval stonemason's lodge blends into the *gesamtkunstwerk* of the Gothic cathedral. And this is where the concept of social development comes again to the fore, a concept which admittedly reveals a completely different structure to that of the "internal history" of the uniform autonomous essence of the artist, as is alone recorded in the "history of style". When building is often taking place on the Gothic cathedral over centuries, when individual "branches of the arts" such as glass painting or picture tapestry can, like organic products of nature, show youth, prime, old age and decay, even complete death, then these are, but only as a simile, "biological" phenomena which cannot be applied to the totality of the really great creative genius, however often a misguided psychologism may have made the attempt. Here and only here does the much-disputed problem of "decline" have any meaning, only here is it of importance; Voßler has shown brilliantly that so-called Central French [Mittelfranzösisch] shows pronounced "symptoms of decline", and Croce has only recently dealt with the same phenomenon, which is at bottom to do with history of language, in his *Storia dell'età barocca in Italia* (1929), whereby mention should still be made of the much earlier splendid characterisation of the Italian Baroque in the few pages of Burckhardt's *Ur-Cicerone* of 1859, even if there the phenomenon is seen, as so often the case with the great purists, through eyes of hate, which are known, however, to usually see more clearly than those of enthusiastic love. In any case, we are here in the sphere of history of language, not history of style; again it goes to show that it can only be disastrous to confuse the two. In the same *Cicerone* Michelangelo appears as the "man of destiny"; his apostle Vasari had already had the decline start after him, of course. As history of style this is an absurdity but as history of language it is at least a half-truth, for whereas in the former it is a matter of the individual nature and its expression, in the latter it is one of the effect, the impression, which for the former is of no importance at all. This is where the action of the copyists, imitators and manufacturers of art begins, who have their place in this period of mannerism (as of the "Barocco", so enthusiastically courted by our decadent age, but are for the most part ruled out of the history of style, are

instead, however, in their place here in the history of language. The so-called late antiquity is likewise an area which comes almost completely under the history of language²⁰; that is not to say that there were no longer any artistic individualities at that time; they are there, almost completely anonymous of course, to be found especially among the portraitists, the mosaicists, not least the architects. This changes in the so-called Middle Ages which it precedes; here too even we of the present who have through our own art received many a key to it which our fathers lacked, still find it difficult to separate from the collective the great creative individuality since it has different characteristics than in "classical" Antiquity and the "Renaissance"²¹; the "Barocco", a blood relative in many other respects as well, comes close to it in its multi-faceted and often obscure "division of labour".

We are eventually faced with the problem of the natural geniuses (according to the 18th century expression) again. What is their role in the history of language? It is clear that they, born into the language of their time and surroundings, must handle this [language] as their heritage, regardless of whether it is a matter of poetry, music or fine art. But the ancient fable of the lion's claw is true here if anywhere, as, conversely, is that of the lion's hide and the ass's hoof. In their case, however, the conventional and inherited everyday language and poetic language displays even in their earliest, youthfully immature works "mutations" which reveal wholly personal colouring and hint at the future masters of language; think of Goethe's *Höllenfahrt Christi* [Christ's Descent into Hell] or his fragment of the *Eternal Jew*, of the young M. Angelo's works at the shrine of Dominicus in Bologna, or the instrumental works Beethoven composed while still in Bonn, to name just a few of the greatest of all. From then on they are unceasingly at work on building up their innate, most personal language and this model not only affects their own professional environment, the minor poets and rhymesters, above all the pseudo-poets in the broadest scope of the word, where all too frequently the plaintive cry of the little witch in *Faust* then seems to sound: How did the others get so far!, it also affects the whole bulk of "those speaking" in general, with that wearing-down of the originally clear stamp of the coin mentioned earlier. It is no different with the literary expression of the great thinkers; everyone knows how "categorical" and "in itself" ["an und für sich"] among others have become the small change of cheap material for the colloquial language of the many, have sometimes even lost their original meaning. Alois Riegl, that over-modest man, who did not even live to see his "fame", belated as it was, would have been amazed - and derisive - if he had witnessed how his laboriously formed expression "will-to-form" has become the sediment of newspaper feature articles. To say nothing of the jargon of seminars on the history of art in whose cloudily swollen flood of language the ruins of once meaningfully devised terms are now worn thin, devalued, slurred beyond recognition, swept away, terms like "block-like" ["blockhaft"] or "dematerialised" ["entmaterialisiert"]. How many phrases, ornamental motifs and cadences of the great maestros, once entirely personal, unmistakable because they were "hand-written", now sound on, utterly trivialised, in the popular music and dance industry, usually without that industry even being aware of this! And it is no different with fine art; motifs which once sprang from a great

artistic mind, such as the Boy with a Thorn, the Horse-tamer and countless others, have become clichés, continuing to live a shadow existence. This is especially true of ornamentation; an unparalleled harvest bursts forth for us from the rich estate of the unforgettable Aby Warburg to whom these themes in their cultural significance always mattered a great deal, and who always knew how to derive something new from them.

In incomparably richer abundance beside this, of course, swells up that (artistically and literally) anonymous linguistic heritage which, even if it initially was of individual origin, has become social and has been retained, even if it has mutated in multiple changes of meaning. This heritage can claim no place in the history of style, if the latter is not to lose its genuine character, no longer artistically autonomous but "linguistic document" in the broadest sense. That is the language $\chi. \epsilon.$, which "composes and thinks" for us and which has its own understandable autonomy. Even the smallest thing can have its value here, often greater and more noteworthy than the contribution of the great linguistic innovators. As far as the content is concerned it is a triviality when in the works of a late Greek historian of Justinian's time a common soldier's cry of horror is recorded: torna, torna, fratre but it contains the first trace of East Romance [Ostromanisch]. Or the same age of "late antiquity" which prefaces the "Romance"* and "Romaic" Middle Ages, what a wealth of small and minute monuments it offers, however "unartistic" and "barbaric" its language may be, in inscriptions there, gravestones and other "craft" objects here, for the knowledge of vulgar Latin and vulgar Greek, in close association with "barbaric" phonetics, which became fundamental especially to the formation of the new national languages - again in the broadest sense, not just referring to the "language of words". This is the case with the so-called Romance* languages as with the Germanic and even the Slavonic ones. This period is thus one of the most interesting as far as the history of language is concerned, and however narrow the title of one of A. Riegl's main works, Spätromische Kunstindustrie [Late Roman Art Industry] may be, arising from external considerations, it nevertheless has a certain internal legitimacy, as, after all, his own thought tended by nature much more to the history of language, than to the history of style (according to our understanding of it) - in sharp contrast to Wölfflin in that respect - and it gave its utmost here as well. And it is again not a metaphor when the talk was of Romanesque* "building dialects" which then unite into a $\chi\omicron\nu\acute{\nu}\eta$ or "written language", even a world language of the Gothic period; the exact same process can be traced in the formation of North (and South) French in the closest connection with political-economic development of the country. Just as little was it a figure of speech when French archaeology coined the most felicitous term of art history for a long time, felicitous because of its historical-philological foundations, that of the "Romanesque Age"*, from a conscious insight into the development of the occidental languages from vulgar Latin, at the same time in close association with the long-established pre-Roman national ethos of the "provinces" of the Imperium Romanum, the national ethos which in fact first expressed itself in the "dialects".

What is meant by the term, history of language of fine art, on which alone the gaze is here focused, might have been deduced with reasonable clarity from what has gone before. K. Voßler set forth the relationship between history of language and history of literature some time ago in one of those essays which, as is always the case with him, leave even the lay reader inwardly enriched and greatly stimulated on account of the eminence of their point of view; it is to be found in the collection of his essays which are compiled under the title describing their innermost reason: *Aufsätze zur Sprachphilosophie* (Munich 1923). I could not help but emphasise once before and elsewhere - though this is a purely personal matter that only concerns myself - that it is one of the greatest honours of my life that the dedication and preface of this little book are addressed to me, the "dilettante" so little suited to the guild, and I may repeat that here.

The depiction of those problems stripped from the creative individual, of those problems of a "development" in Voßler's sense which in the "history of style" have neither place nor legitimacy, will now be able to take its place within this "history of language" along with the abstraction which here, on the periphery of art, is unavoidable, as he himself emphasises; the battle-cry from artists' circles, which we have already heard, could here be given an apt reinterpretation: there is no such thing as speech [language], only speakers. The words that a master of linguistic research, Hermann Paul, has uttered in a book from which the art historian could also learn a good deal, if he really wanted to, may serve as a reminder. "What is really spoken has no development at all. It is a misleading way of expressing oneself to say that a word is "derived" from a word spoken in another age."²² We have long known how true that is of the history of style but there would be nothing more dangerous in the history of language either - as has in fact happened - than to transform the metaphor of the "language-organism" into a biological pseudo-concept and to handle it with out-dated positivist methods. For all language is a function of the spirit; and it was on the basis of this knowledge that idealism was victorious over positivism in the history of language as well, whereby Voßler's early paper dealing with this subject may once again be mentioned.

Understood in this way, history of language, in its ultimate aims, above which the great spirit of its founder, Wilhelm von Humboldt, hangs, is in the greatest sense, history of culture; it too, of course, must remain entirely autonomous, like its style-historical sister, and operate with its own material and its own way of working, not go borrowing from other disciplines, as is so frequently the case with the so-called history of ideas. It is again one of Voßler's most important works: *Frankreichs Kultur im Spiegel seiner Sprachentwicklung* [The Culture of France in the mirror of the development of its language] (1913, revised under the title: *Frankreichs Kultur und Sprache* [The Culture and Language of France] 1929) which teaches us how this is possible.

If, however, we think we know what the history of the language of fine art is, or at the very least, what it should be, then we must in conclusion ask ourselves what it is not. For there is a spectre from ancient times which appears here and is sometimes still up to mischief in the clear daylight of the modern knowledge we have achieved arduously enough. It is grammar, that door-keeper at the ruined palace of ancient education, who lived on wretchedly enough in the schema of the seven "free" arts and gave its name to the "Faculty of Arts" of the old universities, the first of the elementary schools, depicted often enough on medieval monuments as a sullen matron with rod in hand, teaching the children in front of a half-open door. Is there now a "grammar" for the language of forms as there is for the language of sound? That sort of thing is certainly possible and the old painters' tracts especially of Italy strived for it beyond their basic workplace-like attitude. It would be foolish and unjust to reject the useful and necessary aspects of such texts books; but they remain "institutions" in the old orator Quintilian's sense, practical substitutes which can never claim the status and value of scientific thought like the history of language [can]. H. Paul, who was mentioned earlier, has emphasised this most strongly: "What descriptive grammar calls a "language" is a union of the customary and has no real existence at all"; the remarkable statement that the overcoming of this "custom" comes about above all through the language of the poet is also to be found in his work. Here too we owe the decisive elucidations next to Croce to K. Voßler.²³ Ever since the learned 17th century there has been no shortage of attempts to raise this "institution" to the status of a science and hypostatise it: the "logical" grammar of the Jansenists of Port-Royal was one such attempt, undertaken with unsuitable methods, which was then followed with equal failure by the "philosophical" grammar of the Enlightenment. In keeping with its whole disposition the "historicism" of the 19th century then turns into "historical" grammar which despite its considerable achievements must nevertheless now be regarded as having been overcome in favour of history of language and philosophy of language as the only two scientific approaches possible. Voßler is surely right in his harsh criticism when he characterises it as an unfortunate hybrid: it strives out of its very own sphere of activity, technical instructions which are bound to a particular time to the highest degree, where it is fully legitimate, with futile endeavours over into the sphere of history. For if logical normative grammar had established a series of positive forms, in themselves closed, which was clearly dependent on the strict classicist value judgement, but basically sound in itself all the same like the latter, the grammar of the Age of Enlightenment tried to forge a link with philosophy just as its Romantic successor [tried to forge one] with history, and, in conjunction with the Romantic philosophy of history, another wrong track, found itself in a dense thicket from which not even positivism with its theory of evolution was able to free it. If it were there a matter of regress from a hypothetical perfect original state of languages, in the sense of the pessimistic ancient historicism and the new ideal of humanity à la Rousseau, it was here a matter of a progressus in infinitum, in the sense of Augustinian, Christian-optimistic philosophy of history, meeting at an infinite distance, also probably interrupted at a high point which could only be followed by epigonism and decline, as once in the works of Vasari, or a matter of a conclusion to the "development" at the high point of the età d'oro, Raphael, at

whom a stop has been made from Rumohr's *Italienische Forschungen* [Italian Researches] down to Crowe/Cavalcaselle's *A History of Painting in Italy*. In these instances the idea of a linear progress is always central. The so-called new grammarians then wanted to eliminate the covert value judgement by putting "linguistic usage", the "custom" in H. Paul's sense - together with the dialects - in the centre of reflection; that too proved to be a wrong track, a further hopeless striving out of the inherent nature of the "institution" into the sphere of historico-philosophical knowledge. One must, however, read Voßler's remarks on that.

"Historical" grammar has also had an effect on the so-called science of art. In the last years of his life, Alois Riegl, that untiring seeker, read a series of lectures on historical grammar of fine art which, according to those who heard it, and one can quite safely believe it, was extremely impressive; the lecture book he left behind, which was carefully prepared as was always the case with Riegl, would be well worth publishing - as is indeed intended²⁴ - even if only because it might provide valuable information about his unceasing intellectual fight. H. Wöllflin's often misunderstood "art history without a name", as it appears in his famous book on the basic principles of art history²⁵, on the other hand, does not aim at "historical grammar", although it might sometimes appear to do so; Croce has received the "theory of visibility" presented there and in other places with the most rigorous criticism, as is only fitting for a wholly eminent achievement²⁶. We are here instead in the territory of history of language just as in so many places in Riegl's life-work although they seem, when seen from the outside, to belong in historical grammar and were probably intended to by the man himself.

Notes

1. L. Spitzer, *Herm. Hettner's kunstphilosophische Anfänge* [Herman Hettner's Origins in the Philosophy of Art] I. Graz 1903.

2. K. Voßler, *Sprache als Schöpfung und Entwicklung* [Language as Creation and Development]. Heidelberg 1905.

3. German by Poppe, Leipzig 1913. Now reprinted in the translation of Croce's short papers on aesthetics selected by myself, in the complete German edition of his philosophical works. Tübingen, Mohr 1929.

4. In a volume of the *Wiener kunstgeschichtliches Jahrbuch* (Vienna 1926). My other translations of Croce appeared in the Amaltheaverlag in Vienna 1920-1925. Croce's main publisher, the excellent and exceedingly active Laterza in Bari has recently had the good idea of collecting all his

papers on the methodology of art history yet published, in a handsome little volume, *La critica e la storia delle arti figurative. Questioni di metodo*. 256pp. Bari 1934.

5. Sensuous pleasures and aesthetic pleasure, a platitude of the worst kind which has nonetheless been honoured by a German translation. Wiesbaden 1903.

6. By my pupil, Ferdinand Nagler. Vienna, Amalthea 1925.

7. J. Cohn, *Allgemeine Ästhetik* [General Aesthetics]. Leipzig 1901.

8. *Hinterlassene kleine Schriften* [Short works from the estate], ed. Feuchtersleben, Vienna 1842, III, 44.

9. Whistler, *The Ten O'Clock*. German by Knorr. Strasbourg 1904.

10. Hildebrand's *Problem der Form in der bildenden Kunst* [Problem of Form in Fine Art] first appeared in 1893 and has been reprinted quite often since.

11. Cf. My survey, "Über die ältere Kunsthistoriographie der Italiener" [On the early art historiography of the Italians], *Mitteilungen des österr. Instituts für Geschichtsforschung*. Innsbruck 1929, in book form in Italian (translated by Maria Ortiz) Palermo 1932.

12. Hillebrand, *Zeiten, Völker und Menschen* [Times, Nations and Peoples]. Strasbourg 1892. III, 341.

13. Here I may perhaps refer to my "Kunstprobleme der Frührenaissance [Artistic Problems of the Early Renaissance] (Parts I-V; L.B. Alberti, Piero della Francesca, P. Uccello, L. Ghiberti) which appeared in the *Sitzungsberichte der Wiener Akademie* 1929-1934.

14. Again only recently, on the occasion of the new edition of the *Ästhetik* [Aesthetics] by R. Odebrecht (Berlin 1931) in the *Contributi alla storia dell'Estetica* (Memorie dell'Accademia della soc. R. di Napoli 1934): no. IV. L'estetica di Federico Schleiermacher.

15. De Sanctis, *Storia della Lett. italiana* ed. Croce. Bari 1925.

16. On the problem of so-called folk poetry cf. now the new book by Croce, *Poesia popolare e Poesia d'arte*. Bari 1933.

17. I have just recently tried to describe the value and necessity of this "low" i.e. philological-historical criticism especially for the art historian in my short occasional paper on a nursery garden of a

special nature, the "Vienna School of Art History", on the occasion of the 80th anniversary of our École des chartes, the Institut für österr. Geschichtsforschung, Innsbruck, Wagner 1933. It is dedicated to the manes of my teachers, Wickhoff and Sichel.

18. The short style-historically oriented account of the sculpture of the seicento and settecento (with excellent language-historical parentheses as are fitting, even required in the epoch of the "Barocchismo") by Giuseppe de Logu must be called a quite splendid achievement (Florence, "Nemi" 1932, 2 Vols.) not only because it is inspired by Croce's principles. In preparation is the even shorter survey of Italian painting of the 17th century (by the same publishers).

19. Croce, *Kleine Schriften* [Short Papers], German. I, 223.

20. I have recently attempted to describe, only from a birds-eye view of course, a section of it in a rather remote place, the festschrift for Hermann Egger (Graz 1933). ("Über einige geschichtliche Voraussetzungen der mittelalterlichen Kunstsprache"). [On some historical assumptions of the medieval language of art]

21. One may well say that the problem of the medieval artist has for the first time been depicted in a really satisfactory way, on the most solid historical-philological basis, by one of my most excellent and closest pupils, Hans R. Hahnloser (now in Bern), in his book on Villard de Honnecourt. Vienna, Schroll 1935.

22. *Prinzipien der Sprachgeschichte* [Principles of the History of Language] 5th ed. p.28.

23. Voßler, *Gesammelte Aufsätze der Sprachphilosophie* [Collected Essays on the Philosophy of Language]. Munich 1923. 1ff. "Grammatik und Sprachgeschichte oder das Verhältnis von 'richtig' und 'wahr' in der Sprachwissenschaft" [Grammar and the History of Language, or, the Relation of 'correct' and 'true' in linguistics]; 20ff. "Das Verhältnis von Sprachgeschichte und Literaturgeschichte" [The Relation of History of Language and History of Literature]; 63ff. "Das System der Grammatik" [The System of Grammar].

24. Cf. Riegl, *Gesammelte Aufsätze* [Collected Essays], ed. by K.M. Swoboda and H. Sedlmayr. Augsburg 1929.

25. Wölfflin, *Kunstgeschichtliche Grundbegriffe* [Principles of Art History], Munich 1915. Now also the "Revision". Tübingen 1933.

26. Croce's criticism of Wölfflin's views is to be found in his *Kleine Schriften* [Short Papers] II, 206; it follows the Lessingian principle that one can only be lenient to mediocrity.

Translators' notes

P.5 The German verb "aufheben" means: to pick up; to preserve; to cancel, negate. Hegel used the word to mean that a philosopher assimilates another's system and moves it on; "according to Hegel, Hume's philosophy is an `aufhebung' of Locke's empiricism because it retains its essential principles but moves on to work out the consequences and implications in a very different form than one finds in Locke." R.C. Solomon, *In the Spirit of Hegel*, (Oxford 1983) p.275.

P.9 The German word is "Anschauung" which here means "the immediate cognition of a concrete object in its determinations of space and time" and corresponds roughly to Croce's "intuizione". G.N.G. Orsini, *Benedetto Croce* (1961) pp. 31ff.

P.12 Cf. Note to p.5.

P.13 Or "trivialised".

P.17 * An Americanism to keep the pun.

P.17 ** Or "themselves".

P.17 † Cf. Note to p.9.

P.18 Cf. Note to p.5.

P.20 Cf. Note to p.9.

P.23 The terms "Romanik" and "romanisch" mean both "Romance" of languages and "Romanesque" of architecture.

Translation by Paul McClelland