The Psychologizing of Modernity

Art, Architecture, and History

MARK JARZOMBEK
Massachusetts Institute of Technology
The Psychologizing of Modernity: Initial Soundings

When in doubt over theory . . . allow the work to speak for itself.
— Franz Schultze

People want architecture which is warm and comforting to the senses, architecture which is pleasant to live with, which caters to man as he is, and not for man as an abstraction.
— Bruce Allsopp

The mind stands in the way of the eye.
— Arthur Stern

The Art of Psychologizing

In 1888, Friedrich Nietzsche wrote: "Who among philosophers was a psychologist at all before me, and not rather the opposite, a swindler and idealist?" There was, he bluntly adds, "no psychology before me." For Nietzsche, psychology meant two things. On the one hand, it described the space of consciousness untormented by the heavy, accumulated weight of moral guilt. On the other hand, it was a form of romantic self-infatuation, a condition of darkness and loneliness. Psychology, as we understand it today, is neither of these. Basically, it starts from the premise that humans connect through the medium of consciousness, and that, even though they find in the processes of connection both comfort and discomfort, there is a basic structure to the fabric of their contact. But Nietzsche's claim is not without some merit in understanding the contemporary usage of psychology, for in essence he presents the case that psychology is, precisely, modern. It represents not only mankind's liberation from uncritically accepted moral and pedagogical systems, but also the attempt to reclaim the power of the autonomous ego. And indeed psychology still today points to a free and secular understanding of mankind's interactions, helping map subjectivity in the ambiguous and treacherous landscape of modernity. But to make subjectivity less threatening and more comprehensible, it has to make our understanding of objectivity more flexible. And this means that the "history" of psychology because it is both modern and yet a conservative force within modernity is not well represented by the scientific-academic discipline that calls itself psychology. The history of psychology is everything but that history, and quite literally so, for one finds its various messages, theories, and operative intentions in an almost infinite number of fields, including, of course, the arts, for it was there that the struggle to find suitable expressions of our liberated psychologized modernity is thought to play itself out the best. Let us look at the following quote that deals with the noted modern architect, Le Corbusier:

At the right moment, images would float to the surface [of his mind] where they could be caught, condensed and exteriorized as sketches. Le Corbusier's vocabulary was composed of elements like pilote, the ramp, the brise-soleil, etc., which govern in their overall disposition by systematic "grammatical" arrangements like the "Five Points of a New Architecture." "Form" for Le Corbusier was an active, volatile, living force which animated the systems of a structure, lending tension and complexity to all the parts, which were nonetheless held together in a tight unity by a dominant Gestalt.²

This quote by William J. R. Curtis from 1982 might seem an unlikely place to begin a discussion, but the purpose, in this case, is to talk about modernism not through the actions and words of its great artists, but rather through the lens of what is usually referred to as secondary literature. I say "usually" because with this quote, the distinction between primary and secondary is hardly applicable. If one were to interrogate the space of the exchange between Le Corbusier's architectural work and this analysis, between the architect's mind frame in the 1930s and Curtis's description of it in the 1980s, one might ask a very simple question: Where does the author acquire his confidence and upon what does he ground his assumptions? Curtis, of course, does not discuss how he acquired and perfected his knowledge of Gestalt psychology, or what he thinks its limitations might be. This is not to fault the author, but rather to point to a cunning that is just as essential to the understanding — and success — of modernism as the architecture that provoked it.

What is at stake is more than just an interpretation of the architect's work. The passage presupposes a transparency between architect and critic, which asks not to be challenged, for to challenge it would be to admit alienation from the reflective potential inherent in modernist
architecture. Curtis’s passage is effective because it manages to construct the need for psychologized writing as a form of “primariness,” without saying anything about the rationale for, or even the origin of, that need. Thus, despite the seeming entry that it provides into the consciousness of creativity, Curtis’s platform is by no means obvious. The authorial Self becomes remote at the very moment it claims to speak the clearest. It can circumscribe and celebrate the essential aspects of the thinking mind without revealing anything about the possible contaminations of the subjectivity that called it into being. Compared to psychoanalysis, psychology thus does more with less. It could become the conservator of basic and enduring values while being, simultaneously, an analyst of their activity. Balancing these two roles—knowing when and how to play them off against one another so as to avoid detection—was essential to psychology’s uncanny success in both defining and coming to terms with twentieth-century avant-gardism. And so, when William Curtis writes that “Le Corbusier entered my imagination long before I had ever heard of something called ‘art history’,” adding that “at the age of fifteen . . . I hitched up to see the real thing for myself,” it is difficult to separate his desire to seem “authentic” from the practices of modernist history writing.

Terry Eagleton, in Criticism and Ideology: A Study in Marxist Literary Theory, laid the groundwork for a possible investigation into the nature of this cunning by recognizing the strategies of deception by which bourgeois culture, heavily indebted to the romance of individualism, can always seem to make “experiences” meaningful. The voice of the critic, he explains, slowly weaves its authoritative abstractions by means of its mannered yet ostensibly unshakable confidence in its own authenticity. It can be “a style of criticism which in the very act of assuming an unruffled, almost Olympian impersonality displays itself, not least in its spiraling modifications, as edgily defensive and as private and self-absorbed.” Such a discussion, he continues, rests on a rare, courageously simple belief that the deepest personal experience can be offered without arrogance or appropriation.

Eagleton is referring to romantic literature of the nineteenth century. And while there are numerous parallels, the Curtis quote above was not written as a form of literature, but as a purposeful conflation of history and literature. It is simultaneously science and seance. Researchers must, therefore, fight the problem of where to locate the history and theory of modernity in the trenches of these interdisciplinary strategies. The consequences are not easy to predict, for despite the disciplinary confu-

sion that is systemic to the complicity of modern psychology, modern art, and modern criticism, there is always the presumption among adherents that something positive will come out of it nonetheless.

In attempting to smoke out the theoretical principles lurking behind Curtis’s discursive operations, let us start with the recent publication of To the Rescue of Art (1992) by Rudolf Arnheim (b. 1904), one of the preeminent art psychologists of the twentieth century. On the surface, the author seems to make no attempt to conceal his commitments. The fin-de-siècle extravagance that once infected our culture has, Arnheim argues, returned to endanger our relationship with our fellow man yet again—all the more reason to rethink the status of art. Arnheim is, of course, no reactionary. On the contrary, he fights for an enlightened middle class, holding out the possibility that it can be liberated from a “frightening estrangement of the sensory experiences from their meaning.”

The tone is set with the first image in Arnheim’s book, a photograph of a twelfth-century statue of the contemplative Bodhisattva Kuan-Yin representing charity, morality, forbearance, diligence, meditation, and wisdom. The implication is that one can deduce its meaning by looking intensely at the object. “Begin with the navel of the figure. From this center, powerful radii issue in the various directions against the base, forward by way of the left leg, and rightward by the other leg,” and so on. This is, of course, not supposed to be empty formalist analysis, but the beginning of a psychological focusing that replicates or at least approximates the experience of Bodhisattva without requiring the reader to actually understand Buddhism. In the book’s last chapter, “Art as Religion,” the contemplative and healing characteristics of “seeing” come full circle. Arnheim argues that, since religion in the dogmatic sense is a thing of the past, experience of art should step in to provide moral stability in a cynical world.

No reception of a work of art is complete unless the viewer feels impelled to live up to the intensity, purity, and wisdom of outlook reflected in the work.

The task of reforming aesthetic production, Arnheim suggests, will not be easy. We are beset by “an unmistakable fatigue,” “a lack of discipline and responsibility,” an “unbridled extravagance,” a “vulgarity of taste,” “a triviality of thought,” and a “weakness in our [current] architecture and art.” The “epidemic of ugliness” has “infected everything within the reach of the new civilization.” It has made the world
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"opaque" and "insignificant." Arnhem betrays no remorse for holding popular culture in disdain, seeing his ability to distance himself from it as a sign of his own inactness. Cultural salvation, he states, "is the area to which my own work has aspired."  

I occupy my place and fulfill my function while remaining untouched by 95 percent of the common culture; I have never had any contact with sports, popular music, television, or best-selling fiction, even though . . . I began to consider myself as much an American as the next person.  

The path is now clear for Art Appreciation, the arena where scholars and the public - if only they would put aside their respective prejudices and excesses - could meet on the level ground of their shared humanity. In his chapter "For Your Eyes Only, Seven Exercises in Art Appreciation," Arnhem addresses "first-time visitors to a museum" in the hope of opening for them the doors to a "visual experience, which is the principal value to be discovered in the museum." There, so he claims, one can see things "directly and spontaneously" in a way that "requires no scholarship," for "when the eyes of viewers come to trust the immediacy of vision, works of any style, medium or period will let their visitors in on what first looked like a secret."  

Arnhem, not content to admonish, predicts that responsible attitudes to art will survive, whereas "irresponsible" ones will not. But what seems at first an honest assessment of the state of contemporary culture ends as a privileged mystery excluding any further comment.  

In a successful piece of abstract art or music, a pattern of forces transmits its particular blend of calmness and tenseness, lightness and heaviness - a complete transubstantiation of form into meaningful expression. As soon, however, as the red circles or the blue bars, the crusts of metal or the carefully dabbed areas of nothingness make themselves conspicuous; as soon as, in music, the harmonic progressions of the score or the tremolos of the instruments, the diatonic routine or the atonal irresponsibilities, the grating noises or the twelve-tone rows are heard as such, something is wrong with the painting, the sculpture, the music. Or, indeed, with the consumer.  

Arnhem never explains where he locates the boundary between an enlightened protest against "irresponsible art" and political action. He expresses a good sense of disgust at the notion of Entartete Kunst, but it is difficult for the reader to know where the line of demarcation lies.  

My point is not to throw out the argument as old-fashioned or naïve. That only validates its oppositional trap and ignores the historical probl-

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lem of how to address its enormous popular appeal. One has to critique To the Rescue of Art not only from within its strength - its emphasis on powerful artistic expressions and meaningful personal experiences - but also from a historiographic point of view. What Arnhem is really trying to rescue is not art, but a theory of art, a theory shared in one way or another by the likes of Albert Barnes, Herbert Read, Wilhelm Woringer, Clive Bell, Eric Hobsbawm, György Kepes, Bruce Allsopp, Louise Dudley, Eric Kähler, Archibald MacLeish, and Heinrich Wölfflin. All were proponents of what could be called "ontological" formalism. I added the word "ontological" to avoid a standard confusion of terms, for theorists who argued about "form" were often opponents of "formalism." Form was not a mental device, the referent of which was some philosophical abstraction, but rather an essential component of the representational urge inherent in reality. Benedetto Croce, for example, argued that "the poet or painter who lacks form, lacks everything, because he lacks himself." "The importance of form," Wölfflin wrote in 1915, "is not the shape, but the breath of life that brings frozen forms into dynamic motion." Symmetry was no longer considered an abstract classical formula but came to be interpreted as part of Being, and as having "roots that reach down to the nether-most foundations of our sensuous nature." And, as for Arnhem, he argues that Piet Mondrian's paintings may at first glance look abstract, but that in reality what they accomplish is to "establish life in its unchangeable aspect: as pure vitality." It is clear that he is trying to preserve mimesis in the unfriendly territory of modernist abstraction.  

"Abstract" art is not "pure form" because we have discovered that even the simplest line expresses visible meaning and is therefore symbolic . . . It does not offer intellectual abstractions . . . the nature of the outer and inner worlds can be reduced to a play of forces, and this "musical" approach is attempted by the misnamed abstract artists.  

The paradox of defending modern art in defiance of its very abstraction returns us once again to Le Corbusier and to the importance of Gestalt as a trope of a "successful" modernity. As Curtis wrote, Le Corbusier used Form in a way that was nothing short of "an active, volatile, living force which animated the systems of a structure, lending tension and complexity to all the parts," holding them "together in a tight unity by a dominant Gestalt." In essence, Gestalt is what makes both abstraction and modernity comprehensible, for as a study of the unified aesthetic impact of an object, it claims to complete the correla-
tion between conception and reception. Le Corbusier, for example, is said by Arnheim to have “avoided pastiche” by “transforming” the lessons he learned from experience “into a vocabulary with a rigor and appropriateness of its own.”\textsuperscript{29} Le Corbusier’s forms thus “derived part of their authenticity from ethical and political commitments, from a driving social vision, and from an idea of the way things ought to be.”\textsuperscript{30} Eduard F. Sekler, a member of Curtis’s doctoral committee at Harvard University, provided a cogent explanation of this notion of an active, modernist authenticity in the book on Le Corbusier that he, Curtis, and Arnheim (who taught at Harvard from 1968 until his retirement) authored in 1977. The last sentence, one should note, contains the catch.

When form motivated by myth is treated as something autonomous and is imitated in its external manifestation, it loses authenticity. . . . But when form is studied with a view to understanding the conditions of its genius, the results of such study . . . will be meaningful beyond the limits of the individual case unless one denies that there is a substratum of common structure to all human experience.\textsuperscript{31}

Understanding Le Corbusier thus becomes a problem of the reader’s self-understanding. And it is in the context of this struggle where the writings of Arnheim and Curtis converge. Arnheim, for one, wants it to be known that not only is he sensitive and courageously responsive to his environment, but that he can instill in his readers the conviction that his interest in the modern aesthetic is authentic despite its troublesome modernity.\textsuperscript{11} Gestalt thus becomes part of the rhetoric of all that is Good in modernism. In an essay by Arnheim that comes at the end of this book, one reads that the northern wing of the building was “over-poweringly strong” because of the “compelling beauty of its solid and dynamic shape”; it is a “strong” solution that “convinc[es] us immediately” that it is “a valid addition to our store of significant spaces”; it acquires “a permanence more durable than carefully poured concrete.”\textsuperscript{13} Gestalt starts as a sophisticated science of perception, but ends as an all-too-anxious masculine attribute fighting the supposed vacuousness of contemporary life.

The difference between Arnheim and Curtis is the difference between scientist and nonscientist, and although this might seem to be an advantage for Arnheim, I would argue the opposite. Curtis’s position is interesting precisely because we cannot escape into the realm of scientific-professional art psychology, which means that we can be brought into a relationship with the modern genius without ever having to worry about the theoretical and philosophical issues at stake in the discourse. Psychologizing discourses outfox the very science that grounds its principles. From the perspective of a rigorous scholarship or a rigorous philosophy—not to mention a “rigorous” psychology—this would be totally unsatisfactory, but one must remember that rigor is precisely not what is asked for. Students are not supposed to be primed in the intricacies of experimental Gestalt psychology; rather they are to be transformed into the foot soldiers of modernity’s ongoing search for meaningful aesthetic production.

The problem is that artist, viewer, historian, and reader (and the young reader in particular) are embroiled in a relationship for which there exists no precise map of engagement. There is in that sense no modernist Quintilian who can explain the strategies of rhetoric that this theory uses to disguise its manipulations. Critics of art psychology—most of them coming from the direction of more methodologically grounded analysis—have, of course, recognized these flaws. Edmund Husserl, for example, derided Psychologismus as that all too vague and open-ended effort that pretends to go behind a given reality in order to locate the author’s intentions and mental processes. Phenomenology (like Iconography and even Freudianism) postulated a more advanced and thus more “objective” account of the world. But psychologizing, as we encounter it in practice, meets this criticism effectively, for its intent is to persuade as much as to prove, and to manipulate the mind of the reader as much as to reveal the mind of the artist. All too obviously, art psychology has purchased its liberation from conventional constraints at a price. But to underestimate it in its ethical or aesthetic dimension is to treat all too casually one of the major forces behind our understanding of modernism.\textsuperscript{14}

The Life/Abstraction Topos

Wilhelm Woringer (1881–1965) scoffed at those who restricted themselves to the “mere fixing of historical facts,” in a manner that is “cold, tinny, leathery, or deadly.”\textsuperscript{15} Man, he wrote, “no more exists for the history of art than does art itself.”\textsuperscript{16} Similarly, Wilhelm Uhde, in 1933, predicted that art psychology “is slowly taking the place of art history,” because people no longer “want to whistle away long hours in the stagnant air of the archives writing catalogues”; they want “to recognize the reality of the aesthetic will in the paradise of human creativity.”\textsuperscript{17} In order to emphasize this, psychologists frequently asserted that it was not
in the universities that one comes to understand the relationship between art and life, but in an artist’s studio, in a museum, or even in a high school art class. These were the sites where the principles of humanism could and should be made visible. As Gombrich stated, it is through art and not necessarily art history “that some of us can still recapture the meaning of certain symbols and understand their import as well as their translatable significance.” Or, as Aronheim expressed it, “the instructor may offer some erudite facts about the style of the work and the social and political conditions of the period,” but he will not be able “to introduce the viewer to the visual experience.” Even the noted historian Bruce Alspop wrote that

Art history can tend to foster misunderstanding and I think it is true to say that the academic study of art may have done more harm than good because it has made an intellectual discipline of what should be an experience of something precious.

What is at stake is not art over history, but the purging of history from its own aesthetic compulsions. It was the essential drive behind the modern liberation of Self. This becomes clearer once one realizes that the critique of art history has its origins not only in disciplinary contestations about modernism, but also in the German Enlightenment topos of life versus abstraction. In one way or another, Immanuel Kant, Georg Friedrich Hegel, and Friedrich Schelling all attacked “philistines” — to use Schelling’s term — as the enemy of mankind’s progress toward self-fulfillment. The argument was watered down by the end of the nineteenth century into a critique of pedantry and pedagogic sophistry. And, although this did much to challenge a certainly stodgy academic system, one cannot ignore the fact that the topos, though rooted in the German Enlightenment aspirations for a more realistic accounting of life, is not in and of itself liberal. By the 1930s, it had been fully co-opted by reactionary political ideologues nervous about intellectuals and academicians who functioned outside political debates. In 1934, Alfred Rosenberg, the Nazi theorist and founder of the Kampfbund für deutsche Kultur (Combat League for German Culture), of which Wolflin was a member, attacked the “false judgments of the overeducated, uneducated art scholars” who stand in the way of a hoped-for resolution of art and Volk.

After the war, the topos was put to better uses, but always with ambivalence toward those who defied its message of activism. Jacques Mounier, a famous antifascist, continued to challenge what he believed to be an essentially Jewish “bookish civilization” standing in the way of a Christian spiritual collective. By the 1950s, however, life versus abstraction, pulled into the service of the Cold War, came to be defined as an ally of liberalism. In England and the United States, it was a readymade argument that claimed to be both patriotic and democratic. As Aram Torossian explained in his 1937 Art Appreciation class at Berkeley, “intensity” was not a subjective, quasi-sexual thing, but the beginning point for a reflexivity that helps one transcend prejudice. “Violent dislike or ridicule of certain schools” of art, he explained is typical of those who base their opinions on “irrelevant criteria.” In this system, the dry scholar impervious to the vital flow of time and the arrogant “unmodern” members of the petty bourgeoisie were thrown together as the enemies of a new and nobler era. I myself still remember my philosophy professor at the University of Chicago, a stronghold of ontological-formalist analysis, warning students about art history and advising them in particular to stay out of libraries! To prepare ourselves for the life of philosophy, we were to spend long hours listening to music and looking at paintings!

The equation could, of course, be written in several ways. Jean-Paul Weber, an important representative of “La Nouvelle Critique,” and teacher at Bryn Mawr College and the City College of New York during the heyday of art psychology in America, laid blame for the alienation of art from society at the doorstep of “vain dialectics” and “the depressing reductions of the Freudians.”

Between the vain dialectics of the idealists and the depressing reductions of the Freudians, there is perhaps room for a psychology of art that is not in search of the Idea or of types, but of existence and the individual, and which finds in this search a new source of ontological questioning and mystery.

Like most art psychologists, Weber aimed for a middle ground where life could unfold and reveal itself without becoming too cerebral or too interested in the baser aspects of the psyche. Contextualists have done much to dampen enthusiasm for these formalist notions of psychological intensity. Nonetheless, the topos is alive and well. One could turn to the award-winning television program Connections, hosted by James Burke. It claims that it will not recite “facts” about the history of science (an image of gray newsprint comes on the screen), but will instead bring history alive with its recreations and probing investigations.
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(If the screen then shifts to dramatic color images). In other words, contextualism, though requiring a greater awareness of the historical other, does not in and of itself displace a psychologizing attitude.

But once again, this is more than just a question about how popular culture coopted the discourses of authenticity. Contemporary philosophy is still beating the old drum. Take the writings of Arthur Danto, self-proclaimed champion of aesthetic liberalism. In one instance, Danto praises the "tremendous synoptic visions of art as a spiritual activity, to be found in the great works of Alois Riegel, Heinrich Wölflin, and Erwin Panofsky," while critiquing, in the same breath, an art history that, according to him, has "become pallidly academic . . . curatorialized, or worse, docentized." In another instance, he writes:

Now there is no question that Courbet's painting does not have its meaning exhausted when we have, as it were, all the facts that art history is capable of nailing down . . . . There is nothing further for art history to explain, and yet everything important remains to be grasped, even if it cannot be said. If one thinks that this was a mere slip of the pen, it is prudent to think again. The anti-art history topos is an essential component of Danto's defense of photographer Robert Mapplethorpe. Using as his target the "formalist" museum directors who have, according to him, lost touch with the true meaning of art, he demands that Mapplethorpe be viewed in the context of a vitalist ethos, a proposition that calls for Danto to demonstrate his own genuine intensity of observation. First the experience:

I find it difficult to forget that show. I saw it on a hot, bright day in August. . . . I found myself pretty shaken, . . . perhaps because a boundary between fantasy and enactment had been crossed.

Then the direct reflection on the work of art:

The photograph was a greatly enlarged image of the male nipple and of the pores and cracks of the surrounding skin and the hairs growing out of it. This photograph conveyed a particularly desolate feeling; . . . It was a lesson in erotic optics. The dead artist, the vulnerable buttocks, the leathery button of sensitive flesh formed a kind of rebus, I thought, a moral puzzle to be solved.

This apparently yields a "higher" understanding of art that is essential to our cultural reflections:

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We have an obligation to support art in the interest of meaningful lives for our citizens, we have an obligation to allow that things that define human meaning can - when we think about them, or when we are made to feel them, as through works of art - be pretty scary things. The contrast between a moribund nonexperience and a psychologically vigorous one then becomes part and parcel of a hoped-for revival of aesthetic meaning. It helps us to understand not only contemporary artworks, but historical ones as well. In a review of a recent show of the paintings of Vermeer, Danto closes his comments with the following statement:

Plant yourself in front of each painting that holds and draws you, until you have gone as far in its tense aesthetic as you are able. You should exit in the exultant bafflement that is the mark of having experienced Vermeer truly.

The life-abstraction topos demands stasis in the corruptible world. But behind its stationariness, there is an unreflected world that thrives on the slippage between past and present, reader and author, and critic and artist. To problematize these slippages for what they are, namely, manifestations of the bourgeois struggle to (pretend to) liberate itself from its own bureaucratic tendencies, is, of course, to risk being lumped together with all representatives of cultural negativity who are supposedly too academic, too cerebral, or too alienated from art - or from themselves - to give the world an understanding of its concealed meanings. The topos is thus both too simple and too complex to be blandly ignored. It teaches undergraduate students how to free themselves from constraint and it helps middle-class museum-goers formulate the illusion of critical self-hood. But in its patronizing attitudes to its own audience, and in its disregard of its own status as a transfigurable cliché, it is far from liberal, compassionate, or philosophical.

Though I am not a philosopher, I can demand of philosophers the same standard I would demand of "lowly" historians, namely, that they must include a critique of themselves in the questioning process. For from the moment that art, in the seductive embrace of a philosophically-grounded-in-experience, is posited as different from and superior to the aesthetic foundations of bourgeois life, it becomes lost in an increasingly murky and labyrinthine discourse. And this is not to defend art history's dispassion (I will come to that later), but rather to claim that it is not corrected by a haughty call for "philosophical" subjectivity. Philosophy, after all, is just as much an academic artifice as art history, and like art
history it has contaminated populist discourses in so many ways that no amount of experiential recovery of meaning could ever liberate even the most avant-garde art from the clutches of philosophy’s disciplinary intimidations.9

This rough sketch will hopefully be sufficient to demonstrate a simple point, namely, that, as the century progressed, psychologizing discourses moved from a particular historical situation – the aspirations of the late nineteenth century for a liberated and enlightened bourgeoisie – to a more general symbolic and dissimulative gesture relating to and reinforcing an increasingly false claim of criticality. The topos of decontamination and anti-art history are thus far from being pardonable clichés. They are part of a spiraling discursive system that in its density and obtuseness frustrates every effort of historical assessment. Its theoretical legitimacy fuses with historical semblance. Like a cruise ship, it always returns to the same gritty port from which it sailed. Something happened, but did anything change?

This is not to reject the centrality of aesthetic consciousness, but to meditate on the historiographic conundrum that the work of Curtis, Arneheim, and Danto, when taken together, poses in the assessment of modernism and its complicity in the privileging of consciousness. All of these authors function inside and outside established disciplines and indeed want that fluidity to be understood in a positive light as a break with entrenched models of perception.60 Curtis writes as an art historian, but one whose “psychological” insights are still intact. Arneheim writes as a scientist with a yearning to be understood as a passionate savior of meaningful cultural production. Danto writes as a philosopher who has finally transcended his discipline’s myopic obsessions to look with “fresh eyes” at modern art. With Curtis, one can study art psychology’s repressed theorizations; with Arneheim, the inherent sophistication that underlies psychology’s cultural theories; and with Danto, the cynical manipulation of the vitalist position.61 If these psychologizing discourses let one take the measure of an elusive subjectivity, their “history” lets one measure the equal elusiveness of their objectivity.

CHAPTER TWO

The Body Ethos

One does not, at first, really have ideas. . . . They are fully gotten only through the work, and not unless the work toward them is allowed to have its say can one have them.

– Maurice Brown

An observer will adequately gauge another person’s state of mind by inspection of that person’s bodily appearance.

– Rudolf Arnheim

Nicht mehr lesen! Sehen!

– Johannes Molzahn

The function of art is to clarify, intensify, or otherwise enlarge our experience of life.

– John Canaday

Luke! Don’t think, . . . Feel!

– George Lukas

Wölflin’s Body Language

It is no accident that Heinrich Wölflin (1864–1945) chose the Venus in Botticelli’s Birth of Venus as the first illustration in his Kunstgeschichtliche Grundbegriffe (1915). In a wonderfully syncopated sentence, he wrote: “The sharpness of the elbow, the spirited line of the forearm, and then, how the fingers radiate out over the breast, every line steeped in energy, that is Botticelli!” And in an unusual move, he cropped the painting to help focus the viewer’s eye on Venus’s body (Fig. 2). The purpose was to call attention to what Wölflin called Formpsychologie, a new discipline that, he hoped, would forever change the way artworks would be discussed.3 It was conceived in opposition to the dispassionate protocols of positivistic historiography. As Wölflin had already written in his dissertation “Prolegomena zu einer Psychologie der Architektur” (1886),
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repressed discipline that has only recently emerged from under the shadow of art history (the oldest doctoral programs in the field are only twenty years old), architectural history is coming into its own in a way that art psychology never did. Its uncertainty how to define its role as an advanced scholarly discipline, as opposed to an older discipline that saw history as a form of erudition (the work of Colin Rowe being a good example), requires that historians reassess the historiographic concerns of the field. My interest in the historiography of psychology is, therefore, part of my larger interest in defining the future role of architectural history.

30. List of classes offered at the De Cordova Museum School of Art (Lincoln, MA), fall 1997, p. 5.
31. Terry Eagleton, in The Significance of Theory (Oxford: Blackwell, 1999), perceptively notes that therapy is “capable of generating a multiplicity of sometimes quite contradictory social effects” (pp. 30–1). If this is the case, the “history of theory” (whatever that is) must be defined as the history of seemingly unequal social realities. A fuller discussion of this problematic follows in Chapter 5.
32. See, for example, Konrad F. Wittmann, Industrial Camouflage Manual, Industrial Camouflage Program at Pratt Institute, Brooklyn, New York (New York: Reinhold, 1941).
33. Friedrich Schiller, Über die ästhetische Erziehung des Menschen (Stuttgart: Verlag Freies Geistesleben, 1889).
40. The term “bourgeoisie” is used here to designate specifically middle-class and upper-middle-class awareness of the power of visibility. It is a consciousness that exploits the apparent openness of its society – as represented through the eternal presence of visibility, fashion, and the discourses on experience – to disguise the presence of the “unseparable,” namely, the scale of its underlying economic, financial, and commercial realities. The “bourgeoisie” is, however, not a negative and is not equivalent with a culture of superfi-

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ciality. There is nothing as bourgeois as the critique of superficiality. I interpret the bourgeoisie as a culture of cunning, requiring the disguise of wokeness to conceal anxieties about its role in world history. It is a state of class awareness that identifies itself through “critical” aesthetic perceptions, thus its attraction to psychology as the instrument of its manipulations.

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3. Curtis studied at the Courtauld Institute of Art in London and at Harvard University.
5. Ibid., p. 23.
6. Ibid.
8. Born in Berlin, Arnheim began his studies at the Psychological Institute of the University of Berlin. He left Germany in 1933, worked in Rome for six years as an editor for an institute of the League of Nations dedicated to educational filmmaking, and eventually emigrated to the United States in 1940. He taught at Sarah Lawrence College and at the New School for Social Research in New York. In 1968, he went to Harvard University, where he taught in the newly established Department of Visual and Environmental Studies, which represented an ambitious attempt to install studio art in a broad social, psychological, and historical context. Arnheim authored such well-known books as Visual Thinking (cited before) and New Essays on the Psychology of Art (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1986). When he retired, Arnheim moved to Ann Arbor, Michigan, where he became Visiting Professor at the University of Michigan. A recent article by him is “Note a proposito dell’architettura religiosa,” in Domus 757 (February 1994): 82–5.
10. This opening gambit was also tried by Stephen C. Pepper when he positioned “The Madonna of Humility” by Fra Angelico as the initial illustration for his Principles of Art Appreciation (New York: Harcourt, Brace, 1949). Similarly, Edmund Burke Feldman in Varieties of Visual Experience (New York: Harry N. Abrams, 1981) began with Alberto Giacometti’s “Man Pointing” (1947) to discuss “the psychological appreciation of loneliness” (p. 16). It should also be added that the idea of emancipating religious experiences from the “trappings” of religion was an essential argument of John Dewey. For Dewey, who will be discussed in more detail later, direct religious experience surpasses conventional religious experience. It was a position that was both attacked and admired. It appealed in particular to those who accepted secularism, but were unwilling to abandon the premise of a higher ethical standard. Art psychology filled this slot perfectly, as it offered the aesthetic experience not as the experience of an individual work of art, but as the experience of a quasi-religious intensification of life.
12. Ibid., p. 134. In this, Arnheim shows his continued admiration for Clive Bell. Already in
1921, Bell had authored a book entitled _Art_ (New York: Frederick A. Stokes, 1914), in which he explained that art is the most universal and the most permanent of all forms of religious expression, because the significance of formal combinations can be appreciated as well by one race and one age as by another, and because that significance is as independent as mathematical truth of human vicissitudes. On the whole, no other vehicle of emotion and no other means to ecstasy has served man so well. (p. 128)

Bell graduated from Trinity College in England in 1902, and soon became a central figure among a group of writers and artists called the Bloomsbury Group. He is best known for introducing the concept of "significant form" first in _Art_ and later in _Sons and Lovers_ (London: Harcourt, Brace, 1922). Bell asserted that purely formal qualities, such as relationships and combinations of lines and colors, are the most important elements in works of art. It is from these elements that the viewer derives aesthetic emotions rather than from subject matter.

13. Arnheim, _To the Rescue of Art_, p. 3.

14. Ibid., p. viii. See also Rudolf Arnheim, "Thoughts on Durability: Architecture as an Affirmation of Confidence," _Architecture: The MLA Journal_ 68 (7) (June 1977): 48–50. The topic that we are approaching now is a new _fin de siècle_ was also put forward by Shorrer West in _Fin de Siécle: Art and Society in an Age of Uncertainty_ [1993] (Woodstock, NY: Overlook, 1994), p. 138. "The First World War did not resolve the political, social and cultural tensions of the _fin de siècle_, which continued to haunt us as we approach the millennium year 2000."


17. Ibid., pp. 61–2. The pun on the title of a James Bond film is clever, but backfires when one considers that the movie title suggests exclusion and titillation, and not, as Arnheim wanted, inclusion and reason. Bond, however, is the ultimate modern "artist" from an experientialist point of view. He is fully secular, yet it is driven by the civilizational ideals of propriety that are so blantly lacking in his enemies. Furthermore, though he uses a lot of gadgets, the machine does not interfere with his spontaneous creativity, which, having proven itself, becomes transposed into sexual energy.

18. Ibid., p. 65.

19. I would argue that any white knight who rides heroically to the rescue of art and fails to take a clear stand on the politics of art criticism is riding on thin ice, even if the cause is antifascism. In fact, I would argue that any cultural criticism voiced by means of art must be held accountable for its politics. Stating that one is a "liberal" is not enough.


21. Peregrine Horden has critiqued Arnheim in "The Function of Form: Recent Architectural Aesthetics," _The Oxford Art Journal_ 5 (2) (1983): 41, in a way that also calls into question his theoretical background. "Given Arnheim's naive faith in the "phenomenological" method of introspection, . . . it is hardly surprising that he has nothing very revealing to say about the nature of meaning and value in architecture." The danger of such a statement, however, is that it bypasses the nuanced distinctions Arnheim draws between "theory" and "rhetoric." I argue that, as theorists, we may find his argument weak, but all the same, as theorists, we have to find the strength in that weakness if we are to properly critique it. A frontal attack on Arnheim only sets up the same binary oppositions, this time between a "successful" theory and an "unsuccessful" theory, which ultimately leads us nowhere.

22. The circularities and ambiguities this brand of formalism created among artist, critic, historian, and the public at large created a situation unmatched by any other philosophically grounded discourse. It is amazing, but understandable, that formalism can be criticized as a "theory" as if its history has come to an end. Often naive formalism is criticized to salvage ontological formalism. The latter, rooted in the living aspect of experience, was supposedly everything but abstract. As a style in painting, abstraction could, however, be defended by formalism in the same way that architecture could, namely, in the form of test cases where the materiality and visuality of the work defies entry to the dynamic human spirit. This resistance forces the dynamic into self-consciousness and thus into articulation. It was not so much abstraction that attracted ontological formalists as the fact that even an abstract image could be conquered by the force of life. In that sense, ontological formalism saw through the abstraction to underlying nonabstract essences of meaning. There is as yet no comprehensive, interdisciplinary, sociologically oriented, critical history of formalism. How then can we critique it until we account for its impact on literary criticism, art history, and art and architectural theory and education as well as for the fact that it was an international movement with proponents in Germany, Russia, France, England, and America?

23. Benedetto Croce, _Aesthetic Science of Expression and General Linguistic_, trans. Douglas Ainslie (New York: Noonday Press, 1973), p. 25. This has to be pointed out in order to better understand the criticism Wölflin received from Benedetto Croce, Georg Schmidt, and others. See Benedetto Croce, "Ein elektrischer Versuch in der Geschichtsschreibung der bildenden Kunst," in _Wiener Jahrbuch für Kunstgeschichte 4_ (1916): 31–6. As twentieth-century history became more and more interested in the psychology and later the psychopathology of artists (i.e., of artists not as style producers, but as disturbed individuals), Wölflin's theories—and of course Worringer's as well—sounded increasingly vague and old-fashioned. As Georg Schmidt complained in 1946, "Wölflin provides us with no key to understanding the psychological determination of form by the artist's character and experience." Georg Schmidt, "Heinrich Wölflin: His Meaning for Europe," _Horizon: A Review of Literature and Art_ 13/74 (1946): 138. Schmidt was director of the Municipal Art Collections of Basel. What he asserts is certainly true, and it earned Wölflin the reputation of being "a formalist," Wölflin, for his part, failed to see it as a problem.

24. Wölflin, _Kunstgeschichtliche Grundbegriffe_, p. 145 (my translation). The shift from formalism as empathetic experience to formalism as a play of abstract forms (in some sense, the very thing that Wölflin's formalism opposed) occurred sometime during the 1940s and 1950s with the popularization in the United States of abstraction in both painting and architecture. Abstract art could, of course, fulfill the demands of "life," as eloquently argued by Ben Nicholson in "Notes on Abstract Art," _Horizon_ 4/21 (October 1941): 171–6. Nicholson argues that for a representational painting to work, one must concentrate on it so that one can be transported into its space. Abstract painting, by way of contrast, "can give you the actual quality of Greece" for example, "there is no need to concentrate, it becomes a part of living," ibid., p. 174.

The theory of ontological formalism was essential to the formation of critical modernism. And it should be remembered that as a theory, it preceded abstract pictorial
modernism by at least two decades. It is thus interesting to observe that ontological formalism had to accommodate abstract formalist painting, which called representational art into question. However, ontological modernism was not a "traditional" form of art criticism, in the same way that Arpheim's rejection of "grating noise" was not a rejection of modernism, but only of what he presumed to be its crudest manifestations. Abstract paintings could be accepted, but only if they reinforced the connection between form and life.


26. Rudolph Arnheim, New Essays on the Psychology of Art (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1986), p. 39. As a consequence, the distinction between "figurative" and "abstract" is a little less sharply drawn than one typically assumes. Figurative painting may have been in decline, but the figurative essence of psychology was very strong.


30. Ibid., p. 8.


34. One thinks of the blurring of boundaries that typically distinguish liberals, radicals, and conservatives in Europe and North America.


36. Worringer will be discussed in further detail in Chapter Two.

37. It is a statement restated by the contemporary empathy philosopher Paul Crowther, but without reference to Worringer, as "Art is not created for the purposes of art history," in the "Notes on Creative Invention," Le Corbusier at Work, p. 13, and Crowther, Critical Aesthetics and Postmodernism, p. 102.


39. E. H. Gombrich, "The Use of Art for the Study of Symbols," in Psychology and the Visual Arts, ed. B. M. Foss (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1969), p. 159. See also Styles of Art and Styles of Life, "Domus" 74 (December 1992): 26-32. In this piece, Gombrich defends his faith in social psychology. Though he is not very precise as to what he means, he intimates that there is a difference between style and feeling, and that when style becomes autonomous, it perverts feelings into its strictures, and this he links with the goals of fascism. Gombrich seeks a more flexible relationship, where feelings can be employed to enhance, modify, and enlighten our understanding of self and style. Gombrich's work blends - and even conflates - psychological and psychoanalytic approaches, and for that reason will be treated in a separate discussion. In his approach to psychoanalysis, Gombrich was influenced by Ernst Kris, a follower of Sigmund Freud. The two of them collaborated on Caricature (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1941). Kris was the author of Psychoanalytic Explorations in Art (New York: International Universities Press, 1952) and Die Legende vom Künstler: ein geschichtlicher Versuch (Vienna: Krystall-Verlag, 1934). Another important advocate of social psychology was John Rowan, chairperson of the Association for Humanistic Psychology in the United Kingdom. His book Ordinary Essay: Humanism in Action (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1976) spells out in detail his ideology of humanist salvation and its quasi-political implications.

39. Arnheim, To the Rescue of Art, p. 61. This is a formulation of one of Arnheim's assertions in an essay entitled "Form and the Consumer," College Art Journal 19 (Fall 1959) pp. 2-9, in which he aggressively criticized Roger Fry's dry formal analysis for its avoidance of the human subject matter in a Nicolas Poussin painting.


While artists have been withdrawn into their own abstract world, hosts of new problems have arisen which require artistic interpretation, and in the sociological context it is fair to speak of the "dehumanization of the artist" because of their own isolation into a tiny world of abstraction when humanity was confronted with the greatest challenges in all its history.

Bruce Allsopp, Towards a Human Architecture (London: Frederick Muller, 1974), p. 10. For biographical information, see footnote 157, Chapter Two.

41. Alfred Rosenberg, Revolution in der bildenden Kunst (Munich: Franz Eher, 1914), p. 15. An architect by training, Rosenberg joined the Nazi party as early as 1919. He organized the Kampfgruppe for deutsche Kultur in 1927. Shortly afterward, he published Der Mythos des 20. Jahrhunderts; eine Wurzel des deutschen Geschichtsstreites unserer Zeit (Munich: Hoffmeister-Verlag, 1930), published in English as The Myth of the Twentieth Century: An Evaluation of the Social-Intellectual Concerns of Our Age, trans. Vivian Bird (Torrance, CA: Noon Tide Press, 1982), in which he outlined the principles of Aryan racial superiority. Rosenberg also served as editor of the Munich serial, Die Kunst im dritten Reich. Rising in the Nazi hierarchy, in 1940, he spearheaded the so-called Rosenberg Task Force, which was charged with confiscating artworks from Jewish collections and libraries in France and other occupied countries and transporting them to Germany. Hitler appointed him in 1943 to supervise all "intellectual and educational training." He had a rank equal to that of Goebbels. Condemned to death for his war crimes, Rosenberg was hanged in Nuremberg in 1946.

42. See Emmanuel Mounier, Personnalisme (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1950). See also Reinhold J. Haskamp, Spekulativer und Phänomenologischer Personalsimus, Einführende G. J. Frieche und Rudolf Suttner's Auf Max Scheler's Philosophie der Person (Munich: Karl Alber, 1966). Mounier, heralded as an important French anti-fascist, collaborated with the Vichy government. This is less surprising if one acknowledges that his political-aesthetic theories, though ostensibly in defense of democracy, are rooted in notions of the "beauty" of political order and the criticism of "disorderliness" - notions that were typical in fascist and protofascist writings.

43. Anton Ehrenstein, in The Hidden Order of Art: A Study in the Psychology of Artistic Imagination (London: Weidenfeld, 1969), writes the following typical sentence: "A reader who cannot take 'flying leaps' over portions of technical information which he cannot understand will..."
become of necessity a rather narrow specialist. It is an advantage therefore to retain some of the child's syncretistic ability, in order to escape excessive specialization." (p. xi).


45. Ibid., p. 288.

46. Jean-Paul Weber, The Psychology of Art, trans. Julius A. Elias (New York: Delacorte Press, 1969), p. 165. Other members included Georges Poulet, Jean Starobinski, Lucien Goldmann, and Roland Barthes. Each of these critics studied the biography of the unconscious world rather than the facts and events of conscious daily life. This does not mean that they were Freudians. On the contrary, they saw the unconscious as a positive force that is linked to consciousness through the mediating role of the artwork. The battle is hardly over. Seymour Epstein's You're Smarter Than You Think: How to Develop Your Practical Intelligence for Success in Living (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1994) perpetuates the resistance to Freud through an ideology of restorative consciousness. "You either remain trapped in the unconscious and behave automatically, or you can begin to understand it and program your thinking. And, if you can reprogram your thinking you can reprogram your emotions, because they are intimately associated," quoted in Patricia Wright, "Of Two Minds, Freud's Unconscious or Epstein's Preconscious" Massachusetts 5/4 (Summer 1994): 11. It is a thought that emerges directly out of late nineteenth-century psychology and its related bourgeois reform efforts.

47. Ibid.

48. Today, this idea is reflected in some of the attacks on Deconstructivist criticism by authors who argue that it is an "intellectual fashion" imposed by "theorists" from "outside" of architectural practice. There is, of course, nothing more clichéd than to champion the cause and virtues of "simplicity," "directness" and "naturalness" in professional practice.

49. Danto is Johnsonian Professor Emeritus of Philosophy at Columbia University. He is also art critic for The Nation and president and editor of the Journal of Philosophy. His publications on art include The Philosophical Disenfranchisement of Art (New York: Columbia University Press, 1986); The State of the Art (New York: Prentice Hall, 1987); Beyond the Brillo Box: Art in the Post-Historical Period (New York: Noonday, 1992). The turning point for Danto was Minimalism. As a form of art that was "all theory," it anticipated philosophy's reconquest of aesthetic meaning:

But there is another feature exhibited by these late productions which is that the objects approach zero as their theory approaches infinity, so that virtually all there is at the end is theory, art having finally been vaporized in a daze of pure thought about itself, and remaining, as it were solely as the object of its own theoretical consciousness.


The move toward a "philosophized" art is an important aspect in Danto's argument, which confirms for him a Hegelian type of liberation of the spirit, and thus calls forth a new effort on the part of philosophy to reclaim its determinant position (ibid., p. 111). Danto argues that the development of an art of pure theory has parallels with the Hegelian notion of the end of history. This would then entail an opportunity to study art as the more intensely, which is what art history does not do, so he argues. He goes on to assert that we live in a pluralistic society and that therefore art can have no eternal meaning.

He seems to be suggesting that true art has theorized itself out of existence and that bad art perseveres in an ongoing superficial production. This extreme concern with "pluralism" as a typical play intended to evoke the reader a sentimental concern with meaning. Danto argues that painting has lost its central mission as a representation of consciousness because it could not compete with the more potent and technologically advanced medium of the film. Danto goes on to argue that "disturbational art" is philosophically significant. Whereas the other art is "a repertoire of tricks," disturbational art "undertakes to recover a stage of art where art was almost like magic" (ibid., p. 126). In that sense, it preserves our ancient instinct for theatrical expression. Disturbational art is, therefore, presumably something that can be separated out from the pluralist tendencies supposedly residing in society at large.


53. Ibid., p. 36. Unfortunately, Danto's defense of Mapplethorpe is clouded by the circumstance that the "experience" took place in a museum. The implication is that museums are neutral spaces that embody egalitarian democracy. But even Danto knows that museums are arms of the capitalist art market and thus far from "neutral." The museum experience is an artifice in its own right. Danto's assertion thus seems a bit cold, since these very neo-Kantians and their ideology of senate formalism are the ones who willingly put Mapplethorpe on the wall to begin with. But this attack, like Alberto Pérez-Gómez's attack on French rationalism, Rudolf Arnheim's attack on cultural nihilism, and Vincent Scully's attack on dead archaeology, is a necessary part of the pattern language— and a good hurrles it makes.

54. Ibid., p. 41. The tops of the "visit to the show" as an indication of one's personal commitment to art can be found also in the introduction to David Piper, Enjoying Paintings (London: Penguin, 1964). Piper is a noted historian and connoisseur of art. He edited The Genius of British Painting (New York: Morrow, 1975) as well as several books on art appreciation, such as The Joy of Art (Sydney: RD Press, 1954).

It was a May day, hot after rain, the sky uncomfortably scorched to an un-English blue... I turned into Gimpel's Galleries... and there on the threshold I was just aware of a huge area of white across which colour grew, putting down as it grew long delicate tendrils of colour... It seemed even, in that second, a painting that I could not merely live with, but almost live in, and for ever (p. 16).

55. All this ironically leads Danto, as a philosopher (who is not "pallidly academic"), to intellectualize the need for a not overly intellectual space for understanding art; this at least is what he seems to suggest in his praise of Susan Sontag.

Sontag then is arguing against Literaturwissenschaft [literally, the scientific study of literature], in effect she is saying, and perhaps it is right in saying, that it will not necessarily make literature more available to us or make us better readers. She is being anti-intellectual and saying: the work gives you everything you need to know about it if what you want is literary experience: pay attention to it... The interpretation is not something outside the work: work and interpretation arise together in aesthetic consciousness.

Danto, although he seems to agree with Sontag here, is at odds with her on other accounts. Sontag, prototyping against the anti-aesthetics of psychoanalysis and semiotics, wants to limit interpretation to the artwork, whereas Danto is trying to expand the scope of interpretation by allowing interpretation to become an artwork. In this way, he moves to prevent it from degenerating into abstract science. However, Danto does not explain how this expansion of consciousness can or cannot embrace theories in which consciousness plays no part.


58. A work that should be studied in this respect is Ernst Robert Curtius's Europäische Literatur und lateinische Mittelalter (1948), trans. Willard R. Trask (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1973). Curtius complained that medieval scholarship had dismembered its field into myriad sub-specialties and that as a result there was no "general discipline of the Middle Ages." He claimed that the major stumbling block to medieval studies lay in the circumstance that the literary products of the age were divided among modern disciplinary distinctions with little relationship to then current literary practices. Curtius did not try to give a history of "pure thought." He asserted that the history of ideas must be linked to literary topoi rather than to autonomous intellectualizations. It was an important point, since historians today, struggling to see the subject, often ignore the topos of subjectivity. Art historians were quick to challenge Curtius's emphasis on the study of literature as a means of achieving historical understanding of ideas. To question the importance of the object was for them (and this is a symptom of our neo-Kantian psychologizing) interpreted as a sign of self-doubt or intellectual malaise brought on by too much textualism.

59. And, I would argue, this is especially true in Mapplethorpe's case.

60. On this score, I find their work particularly interesting, especially since I, too, function between disciplinary structures. What I am critiquing, however, is the failure on the part of these authors to problematize their hybridized position.

61. This book will not attempt to address all the philosophical nuances of aesthetic comprehension, as this is not the history of a "plurality" of theories, but rather of discursive practices that valorize the aesthetic experience. For an excellent work that outlines some of the variations of interpretation, see Bohan Dzieniedzic, "Controversy About Aesthetic Attitude: Does Aesthetic Attitude Condition Aesthetic Experience?" in Possibility of the Aesthetic Experience, ed. Michael H. Mitias (Boston: Norwell, 1986), pp. 139-45.

Chapter Two: The Body Ethos

1. Wölflin, Kunsthistorische Grundbegriffe, p. 3 (my translation). Wölflin's literary style vanishes in M. D. Hooting's translation, Principles of Art History, where this sentence literally reads "The sharp elbow, the spirited line of the forearm, the radiant spread of the fingers on the breast, the energy which charges every line - that is Botticelli." (p. 2).

2. Wölflin's impact was strongly felt in the literary studies of Theophil Speier, Fritz Strich, and Oskar Walzel. The opposition between diachronic and synchronic history was to become a topos in art history. As an example, one can turn to Paul LaPorte's attempt to "synthesize" the two in an article on Greek vases:

The explanation of art in terms of its evolutionary development is always, to a degree, contradictory to its aesthetic interpretation. If we hold to the old aesthetic idea of the work of art as organism, that is, in its microcosmic completeness and perfection, the work must implicitly contain all the possible aspects of the universe... Though the emphasis of interest is changing in the process of evolution, one can never lose sight of the intuitive, aesthetic wholeness of the single work of art.

Paul LaPorte, "Attic Vase Painting and Pre-Socratic Philosophy," Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism 6 (2) (December 1947): 139-52. Here, LaPorte, who received his doctorate in the history of art, archaeology, and philosophy from the University of Munich and taught at Olivet College in Michigan, follows the basic precept of Max Dessoir: that one ought neither to overaestheticize nor overhistorize art, but rather search for a compromise between the two tendencies.


4. Arendt certainly understood the importance of this work. He refers to it in "Notes on Creative Invention," an essay on Le Corbusier's Carpenter Center published in Le Corbusier at Work.

Muscular sensations, reported Albert Einstein, were important elements of his thought, and according to the somewhat impetuous thesis propounded in Heinrich Wölflin's doctoral dissertation, muscular sensations are the basis of all architectural expression. (p. 161).

5. Wölflin is often described as a student of Jacob Burckhardt. Although he did attend Burckhardt's lectures and was partially influenced by him, Burckhardt was not a member of Wölflin's doctoral committee.

6. Benecke was born in Berlin, where he was educated and eventually became Privatdozent in 1882. His Die neue Psychologie (Berlin: Ernst Siegfried Mittler, 1882) found considerable favor among entrenched Absolute Idealists. He was forced to move to Göttingen, where reception of his ideas was more cordial. He remained there until 1877, when he received permission to resume his lectures in Berlin. Benecke insisted that the psychological dimension of knowledge, which can be established inductively, is the necessary preassumption of all disciplines in philosophy. Benecke's work is still relatively unknown in English-speaking circles.

7. Eduard Benecke, Psychologische Skizzen (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1875-7).

8. Eduard Benecke, Lehrbuch der Psychologie als Naturwissenschaft (Berlin: Ernst Siegfried Mittler, 1873).


In 1894, Külpe became professor at Würzburg, and by 1896 had founded his own laboratory there. He attracted many visitors including Robert Morris Ogden of Cornell University. Ogden was to become one of the leading art psychologists in the United States. Edward Bradford Titchener, who also taught at Cornell, was a close friend of Külpe. In opposition to Wundt, Külpe argued that the thought processes can be studied experimentally. Whereas Wundt favored a more immediate approach, Külpe fractured his...