The Psychologizing of Modernity

Art, Architecture, and History

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To my parents,
Marianne and Henry.
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

Wölfflin’s Body Language

It is no accident that Heinrich Wölfflin (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 Wölfflin called Formpsychose, a new discipline that, so he hoped, would forever change the way artworks would be discussed. It was conceived in opposition to the dispassionate protocols of positivistic historiography. As Wölfflin had already written in his dissertation “Prolegomena zu einer Psychologie der Architektur” (1886),
A history obsessed with linearity... would deceive itself if it were to think that it was an exact science. One can only work "exactly" when one can capture the stream of appearances in actual form... The humanities still lack this foundation; it can be searched for only in psychology.\(^5\)

The "Prolegomena," more of a sketch than a full-fledged investigation, has usually been discussed in the context of Wölflin's juvenilia. However, it was much more significant than that, for it was one of the earliest attempts to draw art and architecture into the emergent debates about psychology.\(^6\) This can already be discerned from the members of Wölflin's doctoral committee. There was the archaeologist Heinrich Brunn, the cultural historian Wilhelm Dilthey, and the rising star of neo-Kantian philosophy, Johannes Volkelt, all important participants in the revolution of sensibilities sweeping through German intellectual circles.\(^7\) If Hegel had made reason the preeminent determinant of what it means to be human — "Wir können nie das Denken unterlassen" — the new approach was to reject abstract thinking and emphasize individual creativity, personal involvement, and the structure of subjective experience. To help give theoretical content to this approach, there were, along with Formpsychologie, several other newly coined concepts that were being discussed: Gefühlspychologie, Realpsychologie, Empfindungpsychologie, and Erlebnispsychologie.

The turn away from idealism had already been anticipated in the work of Eduard Beneke (1798–1854),\(^8\) whose books Psychologische Skizzen (1825–9) and Lehrbuch der Psychologie als Naturwissenschaft (1833),\(^9\) influenced by the writings of John Locke, emphasized the importance of the senses in the structure of cognition.\(^5\) But Beneke's life and career were far from successful, and it was not until after Hegel's death in 1831 that he was able to advance his cause. By the 1880s, psychology had come into its own. Oswald Külpe (1862–1915), a leading researcher, founded a laboratory at Würzburg, and Wilhelm Wundt (1832–1920), a laboratory in Leipzig. Optimism was in the air. In fact, in 1912, Külpe asserted that psychology had so successfully suppressed the metaphysics of philosophical verbiage that it should get the credit for putting us "on the path of a new Weltanschauung."\(^10\) Another commentator wrote that "abstract rationalism" has finally given way to a "concrete-rationalism."\(^11\) And another wrote that the "doomed Atlantis" of Hegelian idealism had been replaced by a "new continent" of knowledge.\(^12\)

A particularly important researcher was Theodor Lipps (1851–1914).\(^13\) Because of the breadth of his interests, art history included,

Lipps energized debates as few others could. Like Beneke, Lipps was highly critical of mechanistic and idealist world views; his motto was "verloren in jede Kunst die philosophiert [lost in any art that philosophizes]." But unlike Beneke, Lipps was profoundly systematic in his efforts. In his Grundsatzen des Seelenlebens (Fundamental Facts of Spiritual Life, 1883), as in his other works, he claimed to create the basis for a "science of immediate experience" that was to register, analyze, compare, and systematically organize the contents of consciousness rather than to merely talk about it. This was no empty rhetoric. His Psychological Institute, founded in 1892 in Munich, was one of the first of its kind, and it attracted students from around the world.

Lipps also helped found the journal Beiträge zur Ästhetik, the goal of which was to bring art-historical investigations into concordance with his psychological and aesthetic explorations. The journal, which aimed to avoid "conceptual games" or "hastily constructed systems," intended to present works that probed the inner groundings of aesthetic existence. Lipps made it clear in defining the mission of the journal that art history cannot be confined to the history of painting; it had to reach to the essence of creativity, for only when art history accepted the truth that creative consciousness was not some vague inspiration, but a domain that could be studied on its own terms, could it have any meaning at all. This meant that one has to begin with the realization that a picture was something that was "first of all perceived, and that through its perception is called into existence; in short, it is lived." Furthermore, since our first experiences are linked with our experience of the body, corporeality becomes central to the notion of what is real. When I see a tree swaying in the breeze, so he argued, I carry out its movements in my imagination, and in so doing not only do I feel alive, but I also enliven the object by my own vital reaction. Once this has been made conscious, one can step back and translate the knowledge gained into forms of scientific observation. Perception, in that sense, was not a haphazard encounter with the outside world through the passive senses, but a form of consciousness actively engaged in the world and working collaboratively with it. And, since perceptions are not arbitrary, but linked to the same epistemological domain as the artworks themselves, analysis begins not with the presupposition of knowledge about what a painting is or is not, but with empathetic contact with its representational interiority. In what came to be a well-known metaphor used by Panofsky and others (but usually without credit to its author), Lipps pointed out that what a furniture maker saw in a log was not inert material, but aspects of corporeal size, form, and shape that inspired him to act. Lipps explained that, for him, the most paradigmatic experience was that of looking at a woman.

I experience in the beautiful womanly form an unusual sensation of life that is powerful, healthy, uplifting and growing. I experience a sense of physical well-being that is nowhere else localized than in the experiences of the forms . . . an expansion of the feeling of life over and beyond the real me . . . not a sensation felt by my real body, but a feeling for life itself.

Wölfflin was well aware of Lipps. He mentioned him in his dissertation and even wrote a review of Lipps's Raumästhetik und geometrisch-optische Täuschungen (Space-Aesthetics and Geometrical-Optical Illusions, 1898) in the journal Kunstchronik. In Raumästhetik, Lipps argued that perception was not a mere recording of what is seen, but a reformation of the visible. Why is it that we see a square when a measurement of something that is only almost square tells us that the image is not fully square? The example, Wölfflin notes in his review, "is not a matter of idle curiosity," but essential to a refined understanding of the force of the eye in constituting reality. We don't see things simply in order to corroborate what reason can determine on its own. On the contrary, seeing has its own dynamic. And art history had better take note, Wölfflin suggests, for perception as understood by an art psychologist and perception as understood by an art historian are as different as "the botany of the plant-physiologist and the pseudo botany used in the kitchen." But Wölfflin was just as wary of professional psychology. He was particularly afraid that it would succumb to its disciplinary constructions and lose its applicability to aesthetic issues. Wölfflin, in his review, thus skipped over Lipps's vast experimental and scientific work to focus on that part most favorable to his own argument, in this case, the corporeal analogy. He pointed out that according to Lipps,

The column is from the perspective of an aesthetic experience, not a static thing but a being that expresses its own form, that steps forward, holds itself together and experiences and masters its resistance (to gravity).

Wölfflin was, of course, not the first to compare buildings to bodies. Already, Francesco di Giorgio, in the fifteenth century, had made a similar equation. A Doric column was an expression of manly strength, and a Corinthian column, of female grace. Leon Battista Alberti also made frequent mention of buildings as bodies, and surfaces as skin. But for Wölfflin, the column was not simply bodylike; it was literally a body
in that it had its own sensate response to gravity. Wölfflin suggests that this simple “psychological” fact will force historians to reconsider the entire field of architectural history. Thus, the reason Wölfflin chose the study of architecture for his dissertation should not be overlooked. Unlike in painting, in which bodies are actually represented, architecture calls forth a much more basic and instinctual corporeal response.27 “We judge every object by analogy with our own bodies.”28

Nor can anyone challenge our right to liken apprehension of human expression to the apprehension of architectural forms. Where are the limits, where does this vicarious response cease? It will occur wherever we find vital conditions similar to our own, that is wherever we encounter bodies. . . . Our own bodily organization is the form with which we apprehend everything physical.29

The essential thrust of Wölfflin’s argument was that since architects invest their structures with animation, observers today can relive the past when looking at a building by studying their own breathing patterns and other empathetically induced bodily movements. “Bodily forms can only be discussed because we ourselves have a body.”30 History, therefore, had to begin with the study of the physicality of artifacts, and this meant that architecture would have to be discussed outside of conventional professional frameworks. In fact, professional knowledge was, if anything, an impediment to understanding its aesthetic language. In our understanding of medieval architecture, for example, scholastic theory and geometrical traditions were not the beginning point of analysis. Instead,

Look at the slender people who confront us in the paintings [of the Middle Ages]. See how everything is taut, how the movement is so delicate and stiff, how each individual finger is pointed and detached! . . . The relation between bodily habit and favored proportions is clearly apparent here.31

The implication is that the body, preceding the manipulations of the mind, was the medium that, if subsequently given the rationality of discourse, could provide the basis for a secure grounding of aesthetic knowledge that was both sensual and rational. Wölfflin would change certain of his ideas about history throughout his career, but he never gave up on this fundamental notion. It was what made his writings so readable and poignant. “The column rises in the wall, . . . the dome swells upward, . . . we surrender to the rhythm of the changing views, . . . the wall vibrates, . . . the space quivers.”32

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This effect of yielding to an oppressive weight is sometimes so powerful that we imagine that the forms affected are actually suffering. . . . One cannot help feeling the weight of the burden. . . . The hard, brittle stuff. . . . has suddenly turned supple and soft; sometimes it almost reminds us of clay. . . . The love of fullness and softness appeared in bulging friezes. . . . The architectural body as a whole remained tightly pressed together.33

[We see] massive bodies, large, awkward . . . with swirling draperies. . . . The light-heartedness of the Renaissance has disappeared; all forms have become weightier and press more heavily on the ground.34

If today these descriptions sound almost commonplace, we have only to see them in the context of then current academic language. Wölfflin was no specialist in construction, like Viollet-le-Duc. He was no advocate of a specific historical style, like John Ruskin. Nor was he a cultural historian of the caliber of Richard Borrmann or Joseph Neuworth.35 Wölfflin claimed that, for the reader, as for him, it was enough to be an observer of a building’s “psychology,” it being the locus of a universal experience that united object and viewer around the symmetrically placed axis of meaning.36 In the modern world in which everything was structured around either professional discourses or neo-historicist pomelics, and thus was distant and encoded, the body, in its ultimate resistance to such encodings, was constant, stable, and true.37 It was not simply Botticelli that one was learning about, but ourselves. “Even without consciously willing it,” Wölfflin wrote, “we animate the things around us. It is an ancient force of mankind. . . . Can it ever die out? I don’t think so, as it would be the death of art.”38

The Rise of Antiabstractionism and the Salvation of the Body
Wölfflin’s faith in the fundamental corroboration of body, feeling, and architecture has to be seen in the context of a broad shift toward subjectivity that permeated late nineteenth-century thought.39 The plodding German monarchical system did not collapse under the weight of its outdatedness as Hegelians had predicted, and with the failure of the 1848 revolution, Hegelianism could no longer sustain itself as a philosophy of enlightened liberation. Instead of giving way, the monarchical institutions grew even stronger, creating a sort of hybrid culture that was both feudal and industrial. As a result, many Hegelians drifted toward an increasingly radical socialism in an effort to destabilize the present in the name of what they thought was an inevitable resolution
to the historical crisis as predicted by the dialectic: Ferdinand Lassalle, Arnold Ruge, and Karl Marx led the way. Many jumped ship and abandoned idealism altogether.

Among the earliest critics was Max Stirner, with his Der Einzige und sein Eigentum (The Individual and His Property, 1844). Stirner presented a philosophy of unbridled sensuous egoism and willful suspicion toward reason; abstract notions of human essence such as those used by Hegelian liberals and socialists alike were scoffed at as mere illusions meant to conceal from the ego its sensuous uniqueness and ingenuousness. Philosophy, so he argued, had only seduced intellectuals into thinking of themselves as liberated, when in actuality it had imprisoned them in a jargon that had left concepts such as “humanity,” “nation,” and even “history” devoid of real meaning. As a consequence, idealism was no better than the dogmatic religion it claimed to supersede. According to Stirner, time should be allowed to manifest itself through an inner historical reality embodied in the soul of the egoist. It is not possible to stand outside of history and yet claim to be in it, as Hegelian thought seemed to suggest. If we try forcefully to coordinate the two histories—the consciously known and the unconsciously known—we are defying and perverting our natural instincts. In other words, if we free ourselves from the artifice of having our actions conform to historical understanding, we rehabit the innate historical consciousness that is our birthright. In this sense, Freedom is not something that realizes itself because it is a known idea, as Hegel argued, but something that is first real and only then becomes an idea. The trouble, of course, is that in being true to ourselves (and to our history) our actions will appear egotistic from the perspective of rationalist indoctrinations, but that, alas, only proves the importance of egoism. Following this line of thinking, genius cannot be defined by an academic discipline or by a professional organization. A great philosopher might be found just as well among dockworkers as among university professors. A great musician can be found just as well in a village orchestra as in the Berlin Philharmonic. Creativity, like a force of nature, will defy the structures imposed on it by society.

Stirner’s critique, verging on a philosophy of paranoia, had a direct impact on the likes of Herbert Marcuse, Ezra Pound, and T. S. Eliot, as well as on French existentialist thinkers. But Der Einzige und sein Eigentum also had an impact on mainstream bourgeois philosophy, since it appealed in spirit—if not in tone—to a general modernist longing for freedom and liberation. From the 1880s onward, over and over again, writers would accuse each other of being excessively abstract or “mental,” each protesting to be innocent of that vice. Richard Müller-Freienfelds (1882–1949), for example, wrote that though he strove to systematize art, his thinking “is in no way grounded in rationalist principles.” Kant’s own philosophy came under attack, even by neo-Kantians, who preferred to emphasize that though Kant may have been for some the founder of enlightened scientism, he was also “the founder of the modern Gefühlstheorie [aesthetics rooted in human feeling].” This revision of Kant brought into the fold a renewed appreciation for Goethe and Schiller. With abstract Hegelianism no longer part of the game, and the radical psychologized ego of Stirner, and, of course, Nietzsche, too extreme for many scholars, Kant, Goethe, and Schiller restored credibility to the Enlightenment. They were seen not only as part of a uniquely German cultural tradition, but also as part of a new—and modern—self-conscious theoricity of purification.

The spirit of Kant lives in Schiller, Goethe, and the entire age and we must attempt [to use them rather than the idealists] to find a path back to the true, happy, and fresh understanding of the world, as it really is, according to the understanding of those ideal heroes of the classical age of our history and thus expose the unhealthy, pompous atmosphere of our contemporary overstimulated and infinitely weakened [abstractly] philosophical speculation.

Wölflin, who was particularly fond of Goethe, picked up on this mood in his dissertation. At every opportunity, he noted, he was going to limit the discussion to “living reality” by excluding “whatever belongs to the intellectual factor.” And true to his word, proportions are not discussed as perpetuations of Classical theory, but as related “to the rate of breathing.” Even the regularity in a row of columns, he argued, is related to breathing and walking.

Ultimately, one could say that Wölflin, like Stirner, attempted to guarantee the position of a sentient human within society. But unlike Stirner, Wölflin saw the human as most vulnerable not only in the face of mental abstractions, but also in the face of disciplinary ones. These needed to be made manifest and expunged through a self-awareness that only a psychology of consciousness could provide. For this reason, Wölflin’s sensualism should not be all too quickly linked to the emergent irrationalist movement. From his perspective, it was a healthy distancing from the compulsiveness of both reason and academia.

The protest against abstraction was, however, first felt in music theory rather than in art history, with Eduard Hanslick (1825–1904)
and his *Vom Musikalisch-Schönen: Ein Beitrag zur Revision der Aesthetik der Tonkunst* (1834) (*The Beautiful in Music: A Contribution to the Revival of Musical Aesthetics*, 1891) being particularly important. Hanslick argued against the tendency to reduce music to recognizable images or aesthetic categories. Music, though it can have vivid pictorial qualities, is explained neither through its titles nor through concepts. “Night before the Battle” no more describes a piece of music than to say that it depicts “courage.” “There can be no content in opposition to the form,” he argued, “since there can be no form outside the content.” The forms that construct themselves out of tones are not empty but filled; they are not mere “contours of a vacuum,” but Spirit generating itself from the inside (“eine innen heraus gestaltender Geist”). But Hanslick, like Stainer, did not yet have the benefit of the discipline of psychology to relate the sensual to disciplinary structure of formal analysis. For Hanslick, the word “psychology” meant the study of primitive responsiveness. It was allied with the physiological rather than with civilizing forces of reform.

The path toward the more modern understanding of the synthesis of aesthetics with psychology was paved by Robert Vischer (1847–1933). His largely unknown dissertation, “Über das optische Formgefühl” (“On Optical Form Feeling,” 1873), and his subsequent essay “Der Aesthetische Akt und die reine Form” (“The Aesthetic Act and Pure Form,” 1874) were the first articulations of themes that were to become essential to modernist-formalist pedagogy. Particularly significant was Vischer’s differentiation between *Schauen* and *Sehen*. Drawing on Herder’s differentiation of seeing and appearance, Vischer argues that whereas *Sehen* is functional and mechanical, *Schauen* is creative and active. Furthermore, it is not based on theoretical preknowledge. The ability to feel is directly related to this kind of true looking. When we regard the mountains, Vischer explained, we should not say “There freedom lives,” but rather open ourselves up to an “optical form-feeling” that works its magic not through our minds, but through the physiological responsiveness of our skin.

Viewing the lines of a body’s form can, in a mysterious way, combine with one’s own bodily perimeter; I can then feel with my own skin. It becomes a feeling of vitality. My spiritual-sensual “I” transports itself into the interior of the object and comprehends its form-character from inside out.

The writings of Vischer certainly played an important part in Wölfflin’s theories. But Wölfflin had little personal contact with him. Wölfflin’s principal mentor was the renowned professor of archaeology, Heinrich Brunn (1822–1894). A specialist in Greek and Roman art and architecture, Brunn was one of the earliest advocates of a perceptual interpretative archaeology. Because of his ability to combine penetrating insights with methodological rigour, and perhaps because of his own early training as a painter, Brunn was able to do in practice what psychologists discussed in theory. As a result, Brunn was given credit already in his own day for bringing about a renaissance in German archaeological studies. But our contemporary art historiography has never acknowledged him as an important link in its development—a strange omission given that Brunn was the chair of Wölfflin’s doctoral committee and that Wölfflin’s first book, *Renaissance und Barock* (1888) was dedicated to him.

Brunn’s *Griechische Kunstgeschichte* (1893), a collection of his lectures from the previous decades, reveals the affinity. In this book, Brunn claimed that the simplest of observations could serve as building blocks for an analysis that could lead to “the psychological reconquest of the lost individuality of art works.” Arguing against the historical linearity and archaeological positivism systemic to his own discipline, he challenged historians to grasp “the spirit of the whole as expressed in the individual work of art.” Brunn did not engage in long theoretical justifications of his position. His descriptions were held as proof enough. And indeed, his description of the eyes of the Farnese “Hera” is perhaps one of the earliest examples of the discursive tradition of “reading the object” as we understand it today (Fig. 3). With clear language, elegantly constructed arguments, and continual reference to the object Brunn sought to draw out an inner truth from the inert stone. What we experience, he pointed out, is a reliving of what the artist intended; the distinction between present and past disappears.

One should think [in describing the goddess Hera] not only about the Form, but also about the expression of a powerful force that we can see lies behind the lids of the eyes which are determined through the Form and through the placement of the eyes [in this bust]. Positioned far apart from each other, they appear as if emerging from sleep and turning to the outside world; they seem to take in everything that comes before them. Thereby they awaken in our own spirit the feeling of fear which one senses when one is surrounded on all sides by a danger from which one cannot escape. That must have been the impression the artist had in mind when making the image of this powerful ruler and queen of the sky. The eyes of the goddess do not simply open and expand in the struggle against sleep, but they stand out with such force that they seem in their wide arch to want to look sideways.
Descriptive analysis of this type, Brunn claimed, can “teach us that in the ideal types of Greek art the forms are not arbitrary but stand in close relationship to the inner nature of the represented essence.” What is required is not just any old seeing, but a type of concentration that brings the viewer into contact with Hera's divine presence and, simultaneously, with the extraordinary accomplishments of ancient Greek culture. And this is achieved through a process that, on the one hand, lingers on the surface of the object — on its “points, lines, and planes” — and, on the other hand, articulates these impressions into communicative language.

If we don’t want to simply see the image, but actually know it, we must translate it into words. This can be accomplished because the image speaks a language that [with practice] can be comprehended to express the highest spiritual ideas. But knowledge of the art work can only then be unlocked when we begin with the points, lines, and planes of the specific forms out of which the image is composed and out of which the syntax of its image is expressed, resulting in an understanding of the spiritual idea based on a clear consciousness. . . . Some still argue, however . . . that to base one’s knowledge on the object itself is downright dangerous.

This emphasis on “visual reading” was not thought to be a matter concerning only academics. Brunn committed himself to reforming the German educational system, which he felt was emphasizing rote and mechanical performance rather than a healthy creative spirit. In the 1880s, he demanded that drawing classes throw out the old copy books and develop “an education of the eye and thus a knowledge of how forms work.”

As we unravel the various theoretical strands that fed into the alliance between psychology, “seeing,” and social reform, it might serve to contrast the writings of Wölfflin and Brunn with those of Conrad Fiedler (1841–1895), an art critic and historian who spent his scholarly life in Munich in close association with artists and intellectuals of his age. Fiedler’s work Über die Beurteilung von Werken der bildenden Kunst (On Evaluating Works of Visual Art, 1876) outlined in the neo-Kantian vein a theory of experience that interpreted perceptual knowing as a mental structure in its own right. Like many in his circle, Fiedler felt that the post-Enlightenment generation in which he lived had drifted toward rationalism and scientism without properly reaping the rewards of another aspect of the German Enlightenment, namely, the liberation of the sensual realities of life from the moral and religious constraints that had

been traditionally associated with perception. Visibility (Sichtbarkeit), as Fiedler defined the term, invited concentration on the physical presence of the art object. And art was not separate from life, but “part of the hidden coherence of the phenomena of intellectual life . . . [serving] to further the understanding of the periods to which they belong.” With this, Wölflin would probably have agreed. But Fiedler was still too enamored of notions of the ideality of art and too keen to prove that the best art possessed “maximum clarity and purity” to attract the interest of Wölflin. Although Fiedler’s observations may have been astute, they remained those of a distant observer, more interested in “the artistic mind,” to use his words, than the artistic body. His history was not dedicated to lived immediacy, but to the “stern laws” and the “inner evolution” of artistic forms.

In conclusion, it could be stated that Wölflin had done for art history what Hanslick had done for music, and Brunn for archaeology. He fulfilled the hope of a neo-Kantian generation that the meaning of art could be restored if it were reconnected to the form and content of life. It was to be a project that in creating its own form of research, would prove successful beyond anyone’s wildest dreams.

The New Antidiscipline Discipline

Commentators on Robert Vischer’s 1874 dissertation noticed a strange tension between the work’s ideal of humanism and its lack of philosophical erudition. Vischer does not mention Müller, Hartmann, or even Kant. This led Christoph Stigwart (1836–1904), a member of Vischer’s dissertation committee, to reject the work for its unscholarly practices. Vischer’s presumption, however, was that if philosophical problems were pushed forward simply because the discipline demanded it, then one would wind up with nothing but a philosophy-for-philosophers. Vischer wanted a philosophy based on the immediacy of “the eye, feelings, imagination,” all working in combination with “the spirit of a whole, warm living being.” He set this out as his goal in the introduction to his Kunstgeschichte und Humanismus (1880).

If Wölflin learned anything from Vischer, it was how to wean scholarship from the protocols of its discipline. As a result, Wölflin’s texts, though they were an extension of the critical realism of his age, are still today difficult to locate in a given discipline. They lie in a discursive field somewhere between the work of Brunn, Vischer, Dilthey, and Volkelt. Brunn might have demanded investigations in classical history, and Dilthey might have required the study of thousands of pages of documents, but Wölflin rejected both of these demands. And though Wölflin learned much from Volkelt, he also had little sympathy for Volkelt’s insistence on precise philosophical articulation, a good deal of which Wölflin presumptuously dismissed in his dissertation as “babble and nonsense.” Wölflin concluded his few remarks on Volkelt by saying, condescendingly: “So much for Volkelt.”

The separation of theoretical speculation from its disciplinary and historiographic foundations was, in the twentieth century, to become humanism’s worst nightmare. Nonetheless, in 1886, when Wölflin finished his dissertation, he was, given the makeup of his doctoral committee, on the cutting edge of critical thinking. In fact, Wölflin had the unprecedented honor of having his book Renaissance und Barock (1888) reviewed in the Zeitschrift für Philosophie und philosophische Kritik by the noted Schelling scholar, Hans Heusler. But he would not be so honored again, and the reason is not hard to understand. By the 1890s, psychology no longer needed interdisciplinary assistance. Lipps’s Psychological Institute in Munich, founded in 1892, had opened up vast possibilities that were expanded by Max Wertheimer, Kurt Koffka, and other Gestalt psychologists. Wundt’s laboratory in Leipzig attracted students from around the world, as did Külpe’s laboratory in the Würzburg Psychological Institute. New journals appeared in rapid succession: the Archiv für Gesamtpychologie in 1903, Psychologische Studien in 1906, the Zeitschrift für angewandte Psychologie in 1907, Psychologische Untersuchungen in 1907, and the Zeitschrift für Pathopsychologie in 1911. The impact of these efforts was not lost on its participants. In 1908, Paul Moos presented the case that psychological aesthetics as a scholarly field of investigation had once and for all established a victory over metaphysical philosophy. Wölflin was certainly aware of these debates but never directly addressed them in his writings, with the result that his work seemed, from the perspective of aestheticians and philosophers, to be adrift in a world of vagaries and polemics.

Clearly, by the end of the first decade of the twentieth century, the disciplinary domain of art psychology was endangered. One of the few scholars who attempted to straddle its increasingly disparate agendas was Wölflin’s student, Richard Müller-Freienfels. Though concerned with the accessibility of art for the person in the street, he conducted experiments in perception, color theory, and körperlicher Resonanz. He remained a member of the Gesellschaft für experimentelle Psychologie well into the 1940s. For Wölflin, it was enough to rely on psychology while
attacking, as his doctor fathers had done, the ossifications of over-intellectualization. Despite the formulaic nature of his own categories such as “painterly” and “linear,” Formpsychologie was, for Wölflin, a Wissenschaft that was never supposed to become wissenschaftlich. Thus, in 1911, when Wölflin spoke at his induction into the Preussische Akademie der Wissenschaften and received the mandate to create “a new field in the academic domain,” he stated that he wanted to create not just another academic discipline, but a discipline based on the “true inner and spiritual” essence of art.

Wölflin was truly a master of the interplay between words and emotions; he purported to tell the reader simply “what is there,” all the while aiming to restore the ontological unity of mind and object that had been rent asunder by rationalism and false historicism. Phrases such as “One cannot help but feel the weight” or “The beauty it offers us has a liberating influence” lock the reader — and the audience in Wölflin’s lectures — into a complicit attitude of empathetic communion with the object. A sentence, for example, reads “Let us look at the marble screens in the Sistine Chapel in Rome,” followed by the comment, “Again, we experience how the proportions simply overwhelm us.”

The sense of spontaneity and freedom that Wölflin was able to interject into art history appealed to the new German Bildungsbürger that was steered, like no other generation before, in notions of elegance, but was nervous about the superficiality of life. The liberating element was thus not sufficiently modern. It was, indeed, a freedom from the old, Germanic-academic bureaucratizations of knowledge, but it was not lawless. On the contrary, it was linked, and specifically so, to a better understanding of the past, which hopefully still resonates within the viewer. This assumption was basic to art psychology’s humanistic mission. Wölflin thus understood the need for a type of pop psychology long before it became identified by name. His Goethian-style language was the perfect compromise between the need for intellectual accuracy and a vital connection to past worlds. Take another example, Wölflin’s opening sentences in his 1931 *Italien und das deutsche Formgefühl*. With an eye toward Goethe’s *Italienwander*, Wölflin assumed the stance of a literate traveler freshly observant of the Italian landscape.

To the traveler arriving in Italy from the North, the world appears all at once more tangible, simpler and more definite. The first campanile — how clearly its prism stands next to the church! — how distinctly expressed are the proportions of its figure!

No sentence could be simpler, yet how complex it is to analyze! It seems to start out as a simple travel narrative. But the experience is not casual. An arduous trip has been undertaken resulting in a dramatic optical experience. “The first campanile” instantly reveals an essential aspect of Italian culture. The sentence ends with two phrases each terminated with exclamation marks.

To understand what Wölflin is doing here, let us compare it with an almost contemporaneous 1934 assertion by the philosopher Egon Brunswik:

We need only to open our eyes and as if with a single blow there appears in front of us an incredible manifold and complexly membered piece of the world constructed out of a vast number of colorful and formed objects of vision. All this can be discovered in the first instance of seeing without time for some premeditated reflection. . . . We want to describe this as “an immediate given” or, in short, as “givens” itself.

Brunswik, a proponent of Gegenstandspessimismus and a professional philosopher, peppered his text with footnotes, annotations, and references to previous works and competing opinions. Wölflin, by contrast, did none of this and thus it is impossible to tell if his sentences are an example of Gegenstandspessimismus, Erkenntnisphilosophie, or Erlebnispsychologie. And though this does not mean that Brunswik’s discourse is more transparent than Wölflin’s, it does mean that Brunswik still subscribed to the standard historiographic courtesy associated with intellectual self-reflection, whereas Wölflin, relying on the general attitude of Brunswik’s psychological realism, claims to be speaking transcendentally.

Though the scholarly advantage lies with Brunswik, the history of modernity has demonstrated that *Wölflin’s* approach was the more viable one, especially since it was not lacking its own type of theoretical legitimacy. Dilthey, Wölflin’s *Doktorvater*, for example, in his much overlooked essay “The Three Epochs of Modern Aesthetics and Its Present Task” (1892), made it clear that his sympathy lies with “those venturesome artists who are not only able to see into the soul of our society . . . but who are also capable of articulating something of the liberating vision for which our society yearns, and that as a result the aesthetics of our century “must be sought elsewhere than in compendia and thick textbooks.” He added that for a true writer, like for a true artist, “everything that exists becomes understandable through that point on which all actions and feelings ultimately turn, never through the abstractions of the conceptual attitude.”

An artist, Dilthey stated, has
to live in his art "as if that world alone existed." It is clear that Wölflin extracted out of this message a new interpretation of history writing. It was this decontextualization of theory that was Wölflin's master stroke; it excused him, in the name of his humanistic mission, from all too close philosophical scrutiny.

As can be expected, the advantages Wölflin gained in crossing the disciplinary boundary between psychology, art history, and literature forced him to ignore any weaknesses in his argument. Kunstgeschichtliche Grundbegriffe and Italien und das deutsche Formgefühl ignored rising criticism from Rudolf Odebrecht and even from Benedetto Croce, who had pointed out that Wölflin's approach was grounded in numerous tacit abstractions. In fact, by 1915, when Walter Benjamin (1892–1940) heard Wölflin lecture in Munich, Wölflin was already being perceived among intellectuals as something of a lightweight. Benjamin wrote that Wölflin saw art as an extension of a "moral obligation inherent in feeling," but that he was too caught up in his own personality to understand his alienation from art. He espouses "a lot of exaltation, not much theory."

But Wölflin was the first to admit his lack of interest in theory. "Cold abstract thought and philosophical speculation is not my thing. But...to reconcile the results of philosophy with the need of the mind, for that I feel myself well adapted." To theorize would be to violate the sacred principle of natural contact between aesthetic beings. But to argue that Wölflin was not a "serious" theorist is to underestimate his antidisciplinary cunning. Is it not the greater theorist who can fully import theory into life? His goal was not that of Müller-Freienfels, namely, to apply the analytical tools of psychology to art analysis in a page after page of complex scientific exposition. His sensibilities were rather akin to a painter's; in fact, as one of his students, Wilhelm Waezoldt (1880–1945), wrote: "In Wölflin's lectures there swells the air of the atelier." Walter Benjamin noticed this as well, recognizing that it was Wölflin one went to hear, not a theory of art. And indeed, few commentators failed to point out the drama that Wölflin brought to the lectures. One student, none other than Sigfried Giedion, wrote:

In our personal contacts with him as well as through his distinguished lectures, we, as his pupils, learned to grasp the spirit of an epoch. Wölflin's incisive analysis made clear to us the true meaning and significance of a painting or a piece of sculpture.

Müller-Freienfels remembered that Wölflin once closed a lecture with the words: that "learning to see" is learning to recognize, or in other words to learn to make judgments for the purpose of intensive and pure enjoyment. Seeing, in this sense, is not a thing of the retina and lenses, it is an activity that circumscribes the whole soul.

And another student wrote:

No one who has heard or seen Wölflin lecture, even if only a few times, can easily forget his remarkable personality: his tall imposing presence, his terse, deliberate speech inspired by the work of art that is being described. Every lecture in his thematic cycles, which would last the semester, was complete in itself, tailored to the lecture hour, yet coherent with the others. I have never encountered such a mastery of presentation in any other professor. Form of his personality) was for this man an absolute necessity and he certainly nurtured it... He held his audiences spellbound with his descriptions... It was one way of warning us against all those dead books [literally, book-corpse] that fill the libraries.

The last sentence brings Wölflin's radical participatory historicism into focus. The living aspect of art (but relieved in the figurations of history) is set in opposition to the banality of erudition. It was thus imperative that the artwork be relocated in the continuum of the historical past through the performance of the lecture. "It was," so one of his students wrote, "as if Wölflin gave his audience eyes for the first time." The presence of history in relationship to the ambiguity toward the text was thus a necessary feature of the restorative mission. But to effect this, Wölflin recognized that he would have to put himself on the front line of the transformation. Very much like a modern artist, Wölflin created for himself a persona that could serve as the conduit for the legitimacy of his textual production. The various dimensions of aesthetics that thereby come into play, namely, that of the practicing artist, and of a universal consciousness, and more importantly, that of Wölflin himself, were supposed to result in an effortless synthesis that preserved and recreated the meaning inherent in all authentic activities.

Wölflin knew that in fighting the distortions of the modernist anti-aesthetic, he could never problematize himself in his writings. That would have led to the appearance of self-doubt, which in turn would have given his critics the opportunity to exclude him from being a player in the quest for modernist certainty in dealing with aesthetic matters. This is the most difficult aspect of Wölflin's writings to comprehend, for it set in place an approach that combined the aesthetic-psychological understanding of art with the aesthetic-psychological prob-
lem of presentation. The art of the one required the artistry of the other, but it was an artistry for which there was no true discipline.

The tensions inherent in Wölfflin's writings were obliterated when they were translated into English. The negation of theory and the avoidance of philosophical terminology became in the context of the English translations simply a sign of Wölfflin's accessibility. For American readers, priding themselves on their humanist-liberal education, but often lacking in the basic readings of Enlightenment philosophy, the texts appeared as if ex nihilo. Discussions focused on Wölfflin's art-historical method and not on his critique of art history, and certainly not on his antiliberal and dubious political leanings. Students were not encouraged to look for his intellectual way stations by reading Vischer, Goethe, Schelling, or Kant; much less were they told to contextualize him within the German bourgeois reform movement. As a result, Wölfflin's intentions at de-theorizing history and de-historicizing theory (giving to the bourgeoisie the tools of self-historicizing) have succeeded all too well. Even recent attempts to locate Wölfflin in "art history" - a form of disciplinary retribution - have prevented a more critical understanding of his work. Wölfflin was willfully nondoctrinal, and inhabited a domain difficult of access for anyone who fails to recognize his equivocation of art history, aesthetic, and performance.

Wölfflin thus becomes the entry point for the study of the trauma that art psychology was to undergo in later decades, for the paradox of organizing an objectivist discipline around the study of psychology while at the same time resisting pure science was impossible to uphold for long. Was this "science" going to emphasize the human, life-enhancing, and life-defining aspects of the aesthetic experience, or was it going to veer in the direction of an empirical science with its notions of methodological study and professional observation? By the second decade of the twentieth century, psychology, phenomenology, and art history, while claiming never to have given up the humanizing mission, would in one way or another opt for more rigorous methods of objectivity. Psychology drifted toward behaviorism; philosophy consolidated itself around Edmund Husserl's search for a "science of being," and art history rallied around Erwin Panofsky's "iconography." But despite the growth of objectivist discourses, commitment to "reading the body" remained strong in the arts, culminating in the 1960s in kinetic art, in the art of happenings, and even in the Body Language craze (Fig. 4). In architecture, these ideas were usually viewed through a conservative lens, more in line with the advanced bourgeois interests of the early art psycholo-
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gist. Take the work of Sinclaire Gauldie, professor of architecture at the University of Dundee. Firmly committed to educating the general public to the principles of architecture, he emphasized how simple it is to make aesthetic judgments concerning an art form that is often held to be difficult to discuss without knowing the language of the professional. His goal, similar to that of Wölfflin's, was not only to make architecture accessible to nonprofessionals but to remind professionals—and perhaps especially the professionals—of the primacy of the body in the perception of architecture.

Of all these channels [through which we communicate] the one through which architecture communicates most forcefully is provided by the relationship of three-dimensional bodies in space as perceived by a moving observer. . . . A building may exhibit that total stillness, as of a guardman at attention, which is itself a kind of gesture, while another—as in the case of some baroque examples—seems to gesticulate in a way which can be positively disturbing. . . . These gestures, nevertheless, just as the faint movement of a facial muscle, are a gesture of interpretation. . . . A building can make an aesthetic impression through the medium of its structure by making us take notice of the way it carries itself. . . . The significance lies in the fact that to most people living things are more attractive than dead matter. Consequently, we are always more open to the suggestion of life, even when it appears in something as inanimate as a building.

Attempts to understand the corporeal analogy—and strip away the eternal return of its radicalized normalcy—can now only be made in full awareness of modernity's long infatuation with the claim that art has the power to speak directly to us. But whether we see this as the beginning of a liberating process or as precisely that which holds us back will remain perpetually unresolved.

Einfühlung: From Intellectual History to Pop-Intellectualism

Many streams of influence fed into form-psychology, but three were particularly important: Einfühlung, "subject-objectivization," and Entartung. Without the articulation and fusing of these theories in the complex, synthesizing modalities of late nineteenth-century intellectual history, twentieth-century modernist discourses would have taken a considerably different course.

The mainstay, Einfühlung, or empathy, is a concept that, following decades of indoctrination, has, like so many other aspects of art psy-

chology, seeped into the depths of popular culture, whether it be "empathy counselling" on college campuses, or that extraterrestrial race of Empaths, such as Deanna Troi in Star-Trek: The Next Generation; whether it be religious apologists who use the idea of empathy to stress the importance of "human contact," or political pundits who try to influence public opinion. In the last election, a radio announcer described the difference between Bill Clinton and Bob Dole as the difference between a younger generation schooled "in the ways of empathy" and "an older authoritarianism." For our purposes, it suffices to point out that art pedagogy was one of the principal carriers of the empathy message. Betty Edwards, in Drawing on the Right Side of the Brain, A Course in Enhancing Creativity and Artistic Confidence (1973), makes her analysis contingent on the reader's ability to understand his or her own feelings which correspond in a magical way to the author's.

If for a moment, we could regard your handwriting as a form of expressive drawing, we could say that you are already expressing yourself with a fundamental element of art: line. . . . The line you use in your signature is the same basic element that Picasso used to "write" the drawing in Figure 2-1. . . . The line can be "read" because, in writing your name, you have used the nonverbal language of art. . . . Your signature is true to yourself.

You were seeing and responding to the felt, individual qualities of each "drawn" line or set of lines. You respond to the felt speed of the line, the size and spacing of the marks, the muscle tension or lack of tension of the artist, which is precisely communicated in the line, the directional pattern or lack of pattern.

Though ancient philosophy had already pointed to the human capacity to experience things through mimetic reaction, the modern notion of empathy allowed for a more fluid and covert sequence of transfiguration of subjectivity to take place. It also stressed the importance of the interaction between people based not on the purely emotional, as one might think, but on the combination of the self-reflective and the social. Lipps, in a seminal article of 1906 entitled "Einfühlung und ästhetischer Genuss" ("Empathy and Aesthetic Enjoyment"), defined the capacity for empathy as part of a critical participation in the fullness of the World–Me continuum. Today, it would be the philosophical equivalent of Luke Skywalker's phrase "Let the Force be with you."

The more reality, that means the more force, depth and inner congruity the individual has, or in other words the more the world consciousness releases itself into his reality—and we could say the more I, in every sense of the
word, “experience” and accept that experience as truth — , the more everything experienced is a participation in the World–Me continuum and all appearences are a turning to its message and the message-bearing World–Me, then all the more will the individual become liberated from his isolation. It results in an “over-empirical” and “over-individual” existence. This is not a “losing oneself” in the World–Me continuum, but a finding of the truth and of the positive in it.\footnote{113}

Lipps goes on to argue that there are four different types of projections of the observer into the perceived object: (1) general apperceptive empathy: the animation of the forms of common objects, such as seeing a line as movement; (2) empirical empathy: the humanizing of natural objects, as when one talks of a babbling brook; (3) mood empathy: putting feelings into colors or music, such as describing an object as “relaxed blue”; and (4) empathy for the sensible appearance of living beings.

A complete analysis of empathy theory would require an accounting much longer than can be traced out here.\footnote{114} But it is important to note that Immanuel Kant (1724–1804) played a significant, but largely still unrecognized, role in its development.\footnote{115} Kant argued that in contrast to an art that replicates the natural — his image is of a mechanical bird — and that is, therefore, at best a form of scense, and at worst, blind imitation, true art is integrally linked with the capacities of imagination and understanding in combination with society’s sensus communis, the enhancement of which was the common goal of all mankind. Kant postulated the three elements of this sensus communis: (1) to think for oneself because reason is never passive (passivity leads to prejudice); (2) to enlarge one’s experiences, because not to place oneself into the thoughts of other people can lead to superstition; and (3) to think consistently, which is in essence to combine postulates 1 and 2 in a process that moves toward enlightenment.\footnote{116} These three postulates and their underlying premise of a dynamic consciousness engaged in refining its powers of critical judgment would become the unwritten laws of aesthetic experientialism, which, in whatever form it took, emphasized the dual nature of experience as both individualistic and trans-individualistic. By bringing these two forces into contact, the individual and the social, Kant had hoped that philosophy as an abstract field of discourse would dissolve into a larger “belonging to humanity” that was not merely philosophical, but that disappears in the normalization of Reason in order to help man to fulfill himself “as a being destined for society.”\footnote{117}

By the end of the nineteenth century, it was hoped that empathy could fulfill this role, namely, that it could help philosophy out of its disciplinary representational crisis. This is one of the reasons why Edmund Husserl (1859–1938), though a critic of psychological subjectivism, nonetheless argued that “consciousness was not the Idea-of-consciousness; it was always the consciousness of something.”\footnote{118} The “I,” he added, is not an entity that one simply places “next to” someone else; it already “lives and works in the other.”\footnote{119} The “I” thus constitutes a sense of belonging that is essential to both the human and philosophical fabric of understanding. Empathy breaks down the walls of interiority that endanger society, and modern society in particular.

Something similar is also true of the experience of communication with others, of the reciprocal exchange with them. If we look each other in the eyes, then subject enters into an immediate touch with subject. I speak to him, he speaks to me; I command him, he obeys. Here we have immediate, personal relationships.\footnote{120}

There were several other Einfühlung theorists that should be mentioned: Wilhelm Wundt (1832–1920),\footnote{121} Hans Cornelius (1863–1910),\footnote{122} and Oswald Külpe (1862–1914).\footnote{123} Let it suffice to consider in some detail Wilhelm Dilthey (1833–1911), who taught at the University of Berlin, and Johannes Volkelt (1848–1930), who taught at the University of Basel, since they served together with Brunn on Wölflin’s doctoral committee.\footnote{124}

According to Dilthey, there was no such thing as a “philosophy of history”; rather, philosophy and history were coterminous in an all-embracing “philosophy of life.”\footnote{125} History thus became the study of individuals defined by the horizon of their own age. The philosopher-historian–psychologist has, therefore, to start with the meaning that historical characters had given to their age for that was the process whereby life became organized and known. Art would play a pivotal role in this history, for, as Dilthey explained in his seminal 1877 essay “Goethe and the Poetic Imagination,”\footnote{126} through art we can re-experience the values that belong to an event and its individual parts through their relation to the context of life.\footnote{127} “Through the eyes of the great poets we perceive the value and connectedness of things human.”\footnote{128} The pathbreakers, in “the attempt to establish a close relationship between the intellectual and spiritual construction of the artist and his work,” were, according to him, Schiller, Kant, and Herder.\footnote{129}

The key term of Dilthey’s Realpsychologie, as he called it, was Erlebnis, a word that surfaces in the essays published in the volume Das Erlebnis...
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but also the reasons for the importance of form, naturalism, and stylistic analysis for the modern age.¹³⁹

Though Wölfflin and Volkelt would develop different notions of empathy, Wölfflin’s being grounded in the conflation of history and the practice of art, Volkelt’s in the philosophical need for subjectively psychological certainty, it is obvious why Wölfflin was drawn to him. For Volkelt, the point of the study of art was not simply to learn about it, but rather to “learn about man himself, through his Gefühlslieben.”¹⁴⁰

Form was an important element in this process. He defines it as that ordering principle that solidifies our inner reality and that liberates our emotion. In this, Volkelt saw empathy not as a losing of the one in the other, but as an exchange between the sensual and trans-sensual.¹⁴¹

The discussions that emerged in the wake of this interest in empathy were quite complex. Vischer initially differentiated between three types of Einfühlung; Wundt and Lipps between four; and Volkelt, while preserving the importance of anthropomorphism, argued in a more idealist fashion that Einfühlung should be studied through symbols. Others elaborated. Gustav von Allesch, in his Über das Verhältnis der Aesthetik zur Psychologie,¹⁴² defended psychological and perceptual immediacy in the manner of Volkelt,¹⁴³ whereas Paul Natorp, though also a neo-Kantian concerned with the “transformation of the world into a single great calculation,” took a more idealist, Platonic point of view in his aesthetics.¹⁴⁴ Antonin Prandtl, in his 1910 Die Einfühlung (Empathy),¹⁴⁵ critiqued Lipps’s corporeal analogy in favor of a more complex subjectivity rooted in two different types of empathy having to do with the difference between the empirical and the felt. Oswald Külpe stood somewhere in between. In his exploration of psychological connections between forms and observer in Grundris der Psychologie (1893) (Outlines of Psychology, 1909),¹⁴⁶ Külpe admitted the limitations of the phenomenon of emotional intensity as it can never be discussed outside normative historical knowledge and relationships. Qualitative judgments are an integral part of art. Ernst Meumann, Hermann Cohen, Emil Utitz, Richard Müller-Freienfels, Paul Moos, and a host of other turn-of-the-century philosophers pursued the polemics well into the 1910s and 1920s.¹⁴⁷

But as our unfamiliarity with these figures might indicate, interest in empathy, by the 1920s, was losing steam. The more complex ideas surrounding phenomenology, behaviorism, and Freudianism had begun to take center stage. Furthermore, the new breed of vitalists, such as Henri Bergson and Benedetto Croce, positioned themselves less psycho-
logically and more idealistically.\textsuperscript{144} Empathy was never to return to its original level of significance, at least for philosophers.\textsuperscript{149} The word does not even appear as a topic in the 1967 edition of the \textit{Encyclopedia of Philosophy}.\textsuperscript{150}

But the end of empathy in the history of philosophy and advanced psychology constituted its beginning in the history of cultural aesthetics! Wilhelm Worringer, author of \textit{Abstraktion und Einfühlung, ein Beitrag zur Stilpsychologie} (Abstraction and Empathy, a Contribution to Style Psychology, 1908), played an important role in the transformation.\textsuperscript{161} Worringer wrote his dissertation under Wölflin in 1907 as part of the second generation of aestheticians involved in the empathy-theory debate. Unlike the philosophers, Worringer saw empathy not so much through a theoretical as through a historical lens. In a historiographic tour de force, Worringer tried to solve the problem of volition that other art psychologists had avoided. Does not our psychological entry into the subject matter override the psychology of the original artists? In answering that it does, he was forced to historicize the psychologizing tendency of modernity in ways that had never been attempted before.

The ancient Egyptians, he argued, possessed little feeling for their surroundings because they were frightened by the incoherent world around them. The best the primitive could do was to snatch individual objects out of the chaos and fix them in a way that was abstract, clear, and resistant to change. Only gradually, as society began to understand and control nature, did artists soften toward realism. First, however, they idealized nature by establishing its permanence in classical form and animating the surroundings in accordance with their own sensibilities. Thus, \textit{Einfühlung} progresses along with civilization, and works only because of the security that science has given to our understanding of nature. Unfortunately, so Worringer also argued, science eventually came to displace empathy by explaining away the mystery of nature. Science can quiet our fears, but it cannot give us truth. For that, we will always need \textit{Einfühlung} if only as a way to regain access to the mystical. It was the Renaissance that began the "catastrophic" separation of feeling from science, reducing the latter to mere purpose.\textsuperscript{152}

Worringer thus suggests that in an ideal society, abstraction and empathy are complementary, and this brings him to the Gothic, which he argues is "a hybrid phenomenon, . . . an uncanny amalgamation of two opposing tendencies" of empathy and abstraction combined in a paradoxical "spiritual unrest."

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Volckelt, predictably, protested against Worringer's temporalization of empathy. He preferred to see it as a more universal postulate, arguing that lines evoke feelings, no matter whether they are regulated by the artist or are found in nature.\textsuperscript{153} With none other than Wilhelm Wundt backing him up, he argued that empathy was an important element of primitive art.\textsuperscript{154}

With philosophy no longer interested in the debate, it was Worringer who, in essence, won. But it was not simply by default. The reason had to do with the unanswered question of modernity that philosophy could not address. If Worringer did not pursue the possibility of reestablishing a balance between abstraction and empathy in modern art and architecture, then others did. Empathy was not only a way to conceptualize the past, it was also a way to metaphysically ground modern aesthetic production. Erich Mendelsohn, for example, was drawn to Worringer's notion of the dynamic "Gothic line," seeing it as an approach that allowed for architecture to combine modernist abstraction with the empathetic primacy of perception.\textsuperscript{155} And similarly, for Herbert Read, who translated Worringer into English, abstract art, because of our empathetic desires, could be made, precisely, nonabstract. One could look at a sculpture of a woman by Henry Moore, he argued, and yet, somehow, see "living flesh."\textsuperscript{156} In essence, what Worringer had hoped was true for the Gothic was applied, by his readers, to an understanding of "the modern."

The failure of earlier psychologists and philosophers to make empathy the prime philosophical project of modernity opened the door to its becoming exactly that. And it was not only in the United States, but also in England, where Worringer and Wölflin were translated — but not Volckelt — that empathy could expand its horizons to become an essential formation of an advanced twentieth-century bourgeois culture trying to take control of its own modernity. Take the case of Bruce Alsop, former director of the Architectural Studies Course at the University of Newcastle. Though he may have been a bit more scholarly than the usual art pedagogue, he, too, champions that ethos of an authentic seeing that lies just within reach of modern culture.\textsuperscript{157}

Understanding implies feeling — with, that is, sympathy (the opposite of which is arrogance). Interpretation through feeling implies the suppression of individuality and the exposure of one's own emotions to the problems of other people. . . . Reasoning is only valid when it follows feeling and intuition.\textsuperscript{158}
Subject-Objectification

The being of a sensuous thing . . . is realized only in perception.

— Mikel Dufrène

Empathy would not have acquired its significance if it had not been supported by the theory of “subject-objectification.” Having never been actually named, its importance has gone unrecognized. And yet we find it used in a broad cross-section of twentieth-century discussions. We need only think of Mikel Dufrène, Edward Warder Rannells, John Dewey, Albert Barnes, and Susanne Langer.

The premise is simple enough. Given that the difference between true and untrue art had to be constructed through an empathetic exchange with the art object itself—in a manifest protest against aesthetic ideas, philosophical abstractions, or disciplinary jargon—it was imperative that one assume that, first of all, there is a correlation between internal and external expressions, and that, secondly, this correlation is the product of free aesthetic contemplation. Basically, if empathy subjectified the aesthetic process by placing thought in the domain of feeling, subject-objectification was its antinomic companion, returning that which was felt to the certainty of knowledge. An early formulation of the theory can be found in the writings of Karl Otfried Müller (1797–1840), whose Denkmäler der alten Kunst (The Monuments of Antiquity, 1832) influenced not only Heinrich Brunn, but also Karl Bötticher and Karl Semper. We can understand past cultures, Müller argued, because we share with the artists of the past a common human nature, one that “has established [the] sympathy of the mind with sensible forms; and on it, all art depends.” This sympathy opens up an exchange between the inner and outer worlds that permits the spiritual aspects of the human psyche to manifest themselves and to be understood centuries later.

Art is a representation, that is an activity by means of which something internal or spiritual is revealed to the senses. . . . Its only object is to represent and it is distinguished by its being satisfied therewith from all practical activities which are directed to some particular purpose of external life. . . . The more immediate determination in art depends especially on the kind of connection between the internal and the external, the representing and the represented. This connection must absolutely be one imparted of necessity in the nature of man, and not assumed from arbitrary regulation. It is not a subject of acquisition, although it may exercise greater or lesser influence on different natures and different stages of civilization. The spiritual significance of a series of tones, the character and expression of a countenance, are not learned, although more strongly and delicately felt by one than another. Nature herself has established this sympathy of the mind with sensible forms, and on it all art depends. . . . To the internal or represented in art—the spiritual life whose corresponding and satisfying expression is the artistic form, the soul of the body—we apply the term, artistic idea, understanding thereby, in quite a general way, the mood and activity of the mind from which proceeds the conception of the particular form.

Subject-objectification of this sort implies that even without the security of codified rules of judgment, like those of the idealists, there was still the possibility of progressive maturation of knowledge. The hope built directly on the enlightenment theories of David Hume (1711–76), Friedrich von Schiller (1759–1805), and Friedrich Schelling (1775–1854). Hume’s critique of abstract philosophy filtered its way into German intellectual debates largely because of the efforts of Lipps, who translated some of Hume’s writings into German. For late nineteenth-century Germans, it was, however, Johann Gottfried von Herder (1744–1803), whose work Kritische Wälder (Critical Groves, 1769) laid out the new equation in which aesthetics and knowledge intersected with feeling and science. Instead of creating a codex of rules to govern artistic production and criticism, Herder conceived of aesthetics as an explanatory science that accounted for the phenomenon of art by means of studied interaction with the art object itself. Whether something was designated “a work of art” or not did not determine its status as an art object worthy of study.

[Aesthetics] chooses the method of philosophy, strict analysis; it examines as many products of beauty of every sort that it can; it attends to the whole, undivided impression; it returns from the depth of this impression to the object; it observes its parts individually and working together in harmony; . . . it brings the sum of the ideas rendered distinct under general concepts.

The aesthetic experience was not simply a matter of taste or of culture; it required an acuity of its own, one that was different from, but not subservient to rational metaphysics, which meant that aesthetic analysis was not a cold science of observation, but an experience of the “subjective concepts of Being.” The irony, of course, is that “the more certain these concepts become, the more they become inexplicable.” Since aesthetics is closely related to our bosom, since it deals with the subtlest experiences of sensation instead of with the principles of reason,
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By the twentieth century, "subject-objectification" and its associated clichés were fully normalized in the advancement of psychologizing discourses. Worringer, for example, attempted to "explain the orderly connection" between the inner world of the Gothic man and "the outward form of expression." 

Herman Nohl, a student of Dilthey and an important educational reformer, explained that "the structure a painter gives to the visible world reflects his Weltanschauung" and thus can become the basis for cultural and political critiques. Müller-Freienfelde wrote that "the objectification in art of an inner condition must be the first condition of analysis." 

The problem, of course, is that the subject-objectification theme holds that a critical cleansing takes place in the exchange between object and perceiver, which, if successful, is beneficial to both. Why else would Worringer ask his readers to pick up a pencil and draw a curve to experience the feel of a flowing line, or Gombrich, in a recent article, ask his to "try to adopt the contrasting postures" of figures in a painting to better understand their meaning. The artwork is thus retrieved from the anonymity — and ignominy — of the archeological storeroom to become relevant to the struggle for self-understanding. But in removing self-criticism in order to return to it, supposedly, all the fresher, a simple question emerges. How do we know that an objectification of feeling is "true" given that artists are more than capable of using artifice in their craft? After all, were deception and cunning not integral to the definition of art from classical times onward? Wölflin never bothered with the problem. He continually exuded confidence in the aesthetic-historical project, evoking the simple significance of art in cultural determinations as if that very simplicity precluded all philosophical quibbles about veracity. In fact, he built his argument on the assumption that his observations are as healthy and natural as the sexual attraction between man and woman.

In each work of art one can differentiate an outer from an inner Form. The outer Form is the immediate and impactful expression of a specific beauty and of a specific character; the inner Form is the medium by means of which that specific beauty and that particular character came to realize itself. Outer and inner Form belong together, like man and woman. Both are oriented toward each other. Only in their union, however, does art appear. 

In his student notebook, Wölflin went on to state that "I cannot experience external reality except insofar as it is already within me," adding that "Language gives me the general forms [of this exchange] in which I collect the object interlocked with its content. . . . The same is
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recognized by the same.”

And it is the purity of his aesthetic intentionality – paralleling that of the historical condition – that permits him to understand history. Worringer stated it best. Creators of art could not do otherwise because they willed not otherwise: “This insight,” he asserts, “must precede all attempts at a psychology of style.”
The body and its active self-consciousness is not a site of crisis, but of resolution. And where a separation of will from desire does exist, it was not due to the innate character flaw of mankind, but to the negative influences of “reason” and “abstraction” on an individual.

To actually have known something, means to have penetrated to the innermost nucleus of its essence, where it discloses itself to us in the whole of its problematic.

Not everyone was convinced that the process was as untroubled as it was often portrayed. Eduard von Hartmann (1842–1906), for example, was notably skeptical. In principle, he was very much in tune with his generation. He argued that instead of allowing consciousness to work secretly through the mysteries of an unseen Spirit, it should be coaxed forth into direct visibility. The goal must be “the elevation of Hegel’s philosophy of the unconscious to a conscious one.” According to Hartmann, out of the trial of an unhappy existence there arises a noetic impulse toward consciousness that evolves together with science in a way that parallels the Absolute and the creation of the world. Consciousness, in its liberation of understanding, cases the inner woe of mankind, but it also discovers a dissonance between the freedom to consciously will and the more fundamental instincts of will itself. History is thus ultimately a process that yearns for stability and concordance between these two forces and for poise in the world. This can come about only when knowledge is adequate to experience and when consciousness acts in accordance with itself. Art, as Hartmann explained in his Aesthetik (1886),

published in the same year as Wölfflin’s dissertation, can assist in the process if it reproduces “making” in its fullness.

As such, art can become as spontaneous and unforced as the song of birds. If the artist plans his effects self-consciously for the sake of effect, we are repelled, for we want to see the innermost core of being so as to get that exquisite feeling of human nature.

Art making was thus a type of instinct that must be separated from artifice. It was the coming-into-consciousness of what is within, not the conscious, and possibly artificial, “expression” of consciousness.

Though Wölfflin and Worringer would have shared Hartmann’s desire
to familiarize experience, so to speak, what made the writings of Hartmann so palatable to them was that they pointed to a deep pessimism with respect to human nature. Hartmann lamented the fact that our Will can tell us one thing, but we do another. If that were true, it would be impossible to ground art history perceptually and psychologically. There would be no “science” of the humanities. In other words, for Wölfflin, Botticelli’s psychological, aesthetic, and artistic had to be one and the same.

Hartmann’s reminder that art can be easily a discourse of deception went against the grain of the modernist search for the purified aesthetic self. His skepticism took on more potent form only when it was reformulated as part of a science by Sigmund Freud, whose attack on consciousness was particularly devastating since it claimed not, as Hartmann did, that consciousness was inherently irrational, but that the irrational could be laid bare by the rationality of psychoanalytic science. By dethroning consciousness and introducing the specter of compulsive and repressed behavior, Freud questioned the very notion of moral and aesthetic independence that was so important to the aesthetic-psychological argument. In essence, one could say that Freud extended and reversed the approach of Lipps. If Lipps argued that we perceive outer reality despite what we measure, Freud argued that we can measure inner reality despite what we see in outer reality.

Perceptual psychology could, of course, accept no such disjunction between external and internal. From Hans Prinzhorn to Richard Arnhelm, Gestalt-oriented art psychologists, and those artists and architects who fell under its influence, have been forced to throw a skeptical glance at Freudian analysis. Karl Bühler summarized it best when he wrote that Freud may have “conquered the theoretical issues of our arch-animalistic natures,” but that the “actual human aspects of life, namely, those that connect us to the gods above, cannot be studied only from their underside.” It was a typical attitude for all who tried to maintain the artifacts of veracity in an increasingly sceptical context.

It is easy to see why Volkelt and Hartmann have remained untranslated. If Volkelt was unwilling to fully accept the temporal uniqueness of empathy as part of the search for a “genuine” modern expression, then Hartmann was downright skeptical that an uncontaminated modernity could be reclaimed without understanding mankind’s predilection for deception. But for art psychology as it began to infiltrate the discourse of avant-gardism, both these concerns were perceived as relatively trivial compared to what could be gained.
Empathy and subject-objectification, reflecting the capillary expansion of psychology into the space of aesthetic theorizing, aimed to define a space of individualistic-humanistic action that was both modern and antimodern. If its a-disciplinary, personalizing epistemology was radical, allowing for experimental personalized relationships to modernity, its political mentality was largely conservative, as it aimed, ultimately, for unity over fragmentation and comprehensibility over chaos. In other words, fragmentation and chaos, even in Cubism, were made possible precisely because they could be framed by the stabilizing historiographic unity of the synthesizing ego. The result, however, was a weakness at the disciplinary intellectual core of these modernist exploitations of psychology. The problem would only start to get addressed in art circles with psychoanalysis and in architecture with post-structuralism.