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***Kultur* and Acculturation:**

**Erwin Panofsky in the
United States of America**

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The History of Art

Abstract

This study shows that the historiographical understanding of the life and work of Erwin Panofsky, that most 'famous' of art historians, remains curiously unresolved, and that the unsatisfactory nature of this appraisal centres upon just how Panofsky's scholarship developed after 1933, when he was forced to migrate from his home in Germany to the United States of America. Utilising Panofsky's correspondence this study then provides a contextualised re-evaluation of Panofsky's experience of acculturation in America, and the effect of this acculturation upon the development of his work.

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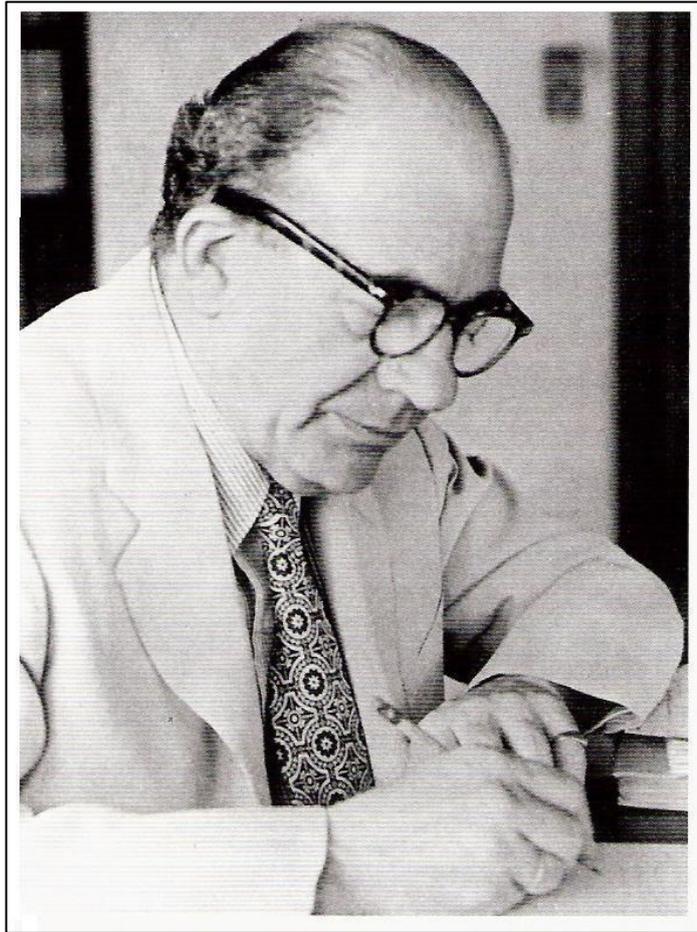
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To my Mum and Dad I owe an unrepayable debt of gratitude. Their love and support is unquestioning, and theirs is an example that will always inform my actions and my choices, both as a parent and as an individual.

Finally, I would like to acknowledge the contribution of my wife, though I know words will not come close to encapsulating its magnitude. Jen, your love, patience, understanding and support never wavered and never wobbled, even when I did. Without you I could not have completed my thesis and, for what it is worth, this is for you.



“Since I never write anything which, for all I care, could not be cried from the roof-tops, you must always feel quite free to use whatever you please. This has been good humanistic practice at all times, and you must not feel that I mind it.”

Erwin Panofsky, October 1st, 1959.

Introduction: Two Panofskys?¹

“It is a matter for regret that the almost unchallenged dominance that he enjoyed during his lifetime has led today to a rather ungenerous reaction.”

Ernst Gombrich on Erwin Panofsky.²

Erwin Panofsky (1892-1968) holds the dubious honour of being the most ‘well-known’ art historian in the history of the discipline. He enjoyed an unprecedented fame, repute and influence during his lifetime,³ and even today, 45 years since his death, Panofsky’s scholarship is routinely used, for good and for bad, as a definitive point of reference in the understanding of the history of art history. Indeed, Panofsky’s name is ubiquitous in this historiography. And yet, if the varied responses to Panofsky’s life and work are scrutinised, it becomes evident that there is a real sense of uncertainty or indeterminacy in terms of how to place this most ‘famous’ art historian. Considering Panofsky’s ubiquity, such ambiguity reflects back onto the very nature of our disciplinary understanding.

Panofsky’s apotheosis in America

Panofsky’s reputation was founded primarily upon his work written in the English language from the 1930s onwards.⁴ Panofsky was dismissed from his post at Hamburg University in 1933 on account of his Jewish background. He eventually settled in America, in Princeton, New Jersey, in 1934; one among many academics and intellectuals who migrated to the United States when the extent of Nazi

¹ The content of this Introduction has been set down in greater detail in my MPhil Dissertation, *A New Study In Migration: Erwin Panofsky And ‘The History Of Art As A Humanistic Discipline’ In The United States Of America*, D. Keenan, 2007 (unpublished).

² E. Gombrich, *Looking For Answers: Conversations on Art and Science*. Ernst Gombrich/Didier Eribon, 1993, p139.

³ The many obituaries written for Panofsky testify to the uncommon regard in which he was held. See, W. Heckscher, ‘Erwin Panofsky: A Curriculum Vitae’, *Record of the Art Museum, Princeton University*, 28:1, 1969, pp4-21; H. W. Janson, ‘Erwin Panofsky’, *American Philosophical Quarterly*, 1968, pp151-160; R. W. Lee, ‘Erwin Panofsky’, *Art Journal*, 27:4, summer: 1968, pp 368-370; E. H. Gombrich, ‘Erwin Panofsky’, *Burlington Magazine*, 110, June 1968, pp357-360; J. A. Emmens, ‘Erwin Panofsky as a Humanist’, *Simiolus*, 2, 1967-68, pp109-113; J. Białostocki, ‘Erwin Panofsky: Thinker, Historian, Human Being’, *Simiolus*, 4, 1970, pp68-89.

⁴ See, Białostocki, *Ibid.*, p68.

intolerance became evident.⁵ The number of art historians forced to leave Germany was particularly high, and their influence is often credited with the formation and professionalization of the discipline in the United States.⁶ Panofsky was at the very forefront of these developments, and is commonly cited as “the acknowledged dean of the refugee art historians.”⁷ His scholarship helped shape the discipline of art history as it developed in America after the migration. Indeed, as Norman Cantor notes of Panofsky’s success and achievements,

He became the unchallenged academic power-broker in art history in the United States...Everything he touched turned into a triumph...he almost singlehandedly legitimated a new discipline.⁸

In the now famous ‘Introductory’ to *Studies in Iconology* (1939) Panofsky introduced what could still today be regarded as the standard methodology for art historical practice.⁹ Commonly understood as the programmatic formulation of ‘how to do’ art history, iconography involves the investigation of works of art and their ‘meaning’, based upon the examination of relevant historical documentation. Following Panofsky’s ‘Introductory’ it became commonplace for art-historical studies to involve the examination of literary sources and the exploration of the religious, political and social ideas relevant to the contextual exegesis of the artwork. This ‘new’ methodology was taken up by an eager American studentship as the *modus operandi* with which to engage the art of the past.¹⁰ As a prescribed method, a framework for practice, iconography was widely adopted as the means to unhinge the study of art from its association with elitist notions of ‘taste’ and ‘sensitivity’. Instead of art remaining the sole province of those in the upper echelons of society, the rigorous, consistent and practicable methodology of iconography meant that the study of art became almost ‘democratic’ in character – the validation through which art history could establish its proper place

⁵ For analyses of this scholarly migration see, S. Duggan & B. Drury, *The Rescue of Science and Learning: The Story of the Emergency Committee in Aid of Displaced Foreign Scholars*, 1948; L. Coser, *Refugee Scholars in America*, 1984; M. Jay, *Permanent Exiles: Essays on the Intellectual Migration from Germany to America*, 1985, and B. Katz, ‘The Acculturation of Thought: Transformations of the Refugee Scholar in America’, *Journal of Modern History*, 63:4, December 1991, pp740-752.

⁶ See, K. Michels, ‘Transfer and Transformation: The German Period in American Art History’, in S. Barron & S. Eckmann, *Exiles and Émigrés: The Flight of European Artists from Hitler*, 1997, pp304-316; especially p306.

⁷ L. Coser, *Refugee Scholars in America*, op. cit., p257.

⁸ N. Cantor, *Inventing the Middle Ages: The Lives, Works, and Ideas of the Great Medievalists of the Twentieth Century*, 1991, p174-6.

⁹ E. Panofsky, *Studies in Iconology: Humanistic Themes in the Art of the Renaissance*, 1939. Panofsky did not simply ‘invent’ the term or the methodology himself, but, as Creighton Gilbert points out, “(‘Studies in Iconology’) marks an epoch in the history of art in America, since it introduced in a fully developed state a technique which had been gradually developed abroad.” ‘On Subject and Not-Subject in Italian Renaissance Pictures’, *The Art Bulletin*, 34, 1952, pp202-218; p202, n1.

¹⁰ Heckscher, *Erwin Panofsky: A Curriculum Vitae*, op. cit., p15.

within the American university.¹¹ Irving Lavin, a student of Panofsky, has testified to the huge influence of this methodology in America:

The *cri de guerre* was iconography, the study of the subject matter of works of art that revealed their intellectual content, on a par with and often involving works of literature, philosophy, theology and other modes of thought more commonly associated with such content. The belief that artists could speak their minds as well as their hearts with their hands transformed art history from an effete exercise in connoisseurship and appreciation into a rigorous and challenging history of ideas with a distinctive methodology that Erwin Panofsky raised to the level of a humanistic discipline in its own right...Art was thus no longer viewed as a *rara avis* aloft in the rarefied atmosphere of elitist aesthetics but as an integral part of our cultural heritage, accessible to anyone with the requisite imagination, intelligence and persistence. The study of visual images thus became an intellectual endeavour comparable to fields in which words were the medium.¹²

Following the publication of *Studies in Iconology* Panofsky led a burgeoning new discipline by example. He produced a corpus of work now considered exemplary of an expansive and confident period of 'American' art history. The paradigmatic nature of Panofsky's scholarship is perhaps best reflected in his major publications, *The Life and Art of Albrecht Dürer* (1943), *Early Netherlandish Painting: Its Origins and Character* (1953), and *Renaissance and Renascences in Western Art* (1960). Widely praised as consummate models of detailed art-historical research, each one of these eminently readable textbooks was received, almost upon publication, as an authoritative, even canonical work in the field. Panofsky's book-length analysis of Dürer's life and work could be said to have provided *the* model for the large-scale art-historical monograph.¹³ And, by examining early Netherlandish art and the art of the Renaissance in such an assured and comprehensive manner Panofsky also provided a model for dealing with whole art-historical 'periods', and even the notion of 'periodicity' itself.

In his English language work Panofsky established for many the parameters in terms of what the history of art could, and even should be; and in the decades following the migration American art history flourished. Students were increasingly drawn to the study of art, and with the example of émigré scholars such as Panofsky they were instilled with the confidence to go on and be industrious

¹¹ Christine McCorkel analyses the 'congruence' between repeatable and testable methodologies, a 'scientific' knowledge, and a 'democratic' worldview in, 'Sense and Sensibility: An Epistemological Approach to the Philosophy of Art History,' *Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*, 34:1, Autumn 1975, pp35-50. This idea will be analysed in greater detail in a following chapter.

¹² I. Lavin, 'Theory in My Time', *The Art Bulletin*, 78:1, March 1996, pp13-15; p13.

¹³ Gombrich described Panofsky's 'Dürer' as, "the most rounded monograph written on an artist written in our time." *Erwin Panofsky. Obituary*, op. cit., p360.

researchers and scholars in their own right.¹⁴ Increasingly confident in the productivity and efficacy of their tried and tested methods, American art historians in the middle decades of the twentieth century became ever-the-more assured in regards to the status of their discipline, and its important place within the liberal arts curriculum.¹⁵ As the United States became well-established as the world centre for art-historical research,¹⁶ a certain sense of self-satisfaction even became a disciplinary characteristic. As Colin Eisler wrote in 1976,

In no country in the world is art more extensively explored than in America, where more specialised publications, graduate schools, museums, art schools, historical and other societies subject themselves to an endless barrage of lectures, publications, didactic exhibitions, symposia, panels and conferences. So many teachers, curators, independent scholars, collectors, art dealers, art librarians and audio-visual specialists belong to the College Art Association (7,500 members) and the Society of Architectural Historians (4,000 members) that these two organisations, meeting annually, can find only a handful of American cities large enough to afford housing for this ravaging horde of art historians.¹⁷

For most commentators Erwin Panofsky remains *the* principle figure in the development of this confident and buoyant period in the history of art history. The paradigmatic nature of his work means Panofsky is now widely considered the archetypal 'American' art historian. As Willibald Sauerländer declared in the mid-1990s,

More than any other scholar of his generation Panofsky had shaped the methods and the interests of the field, had enlarged the perspectives of the discipline and raised art history to a new respected status among the humanities.¹⁸

Reaction to the 'American' Panofsky

Despite the optimism engendered by the rapid growth and expansion of art history as an academic subject, over the past thirty years or so there has been a censorious reappraisal of this formative period in the discipline's history and, as such, Panofsky's own legacy has come under no-little critical scrutiny. These developments began at the margins of mainstream art-historical discourse, stimulated in large part by the critical and theoretical trends that became manifest within other

¹⁴ See, Lavin, *Theory in My Time*, op. cit, p13.

¹⁵ H. Bober 'The Gothic Tower and the Stork Club', *Arts and Sciences*, spring 1962, pp1-8; p3.

¹⁶ A fact recognised even in Great Britain. See, for example, the 'Editorial: Art History in America', in *The Burlington Magazine*, 104:706, January 1962, p3-5.

¹⁷ Colin Eisler, 'American Art History, God Shed His Grace on Thee', *Art News*, 75, May 1976, pp64-73; p66.

¹⁸ 'Struggling with a Deconstructed Panofsky', in I. Lavin (ed.), *Meaning in the Visual Arts: Views From the Outside: A Centennial Commemoration of Erwin Panofsky*, 1995, p385-399; p385.

academic disciplines, most notably literary studies. Post-structuralism and the procedures of deconstruction had posed a radical challenge to the view that theory neutral observations were at all possible. Consequently, positivist assumptions, “according to which descriptions of our observations could be cognitively meaningful (i.e. have an empirical truth value) independently from any theoretical framework presupposed by the observer,”¹⁹ were declared untenable. This critical perspective transformed disciplines such as anthropology and literary studies in the 1960s, and in the early 1970s a small cohort of art historians were likewise encouraged to challenge the overtly ‘positivist’ nature of their own discipline. These critics believed that the growth and ‘success’ of the discipline had distracted art historians somewhat from consideration of the theoretical exigencies involved in their practice.²⁰ Concerns were raised that a preoccupation with empirically garnered data, and a sanguine belief in the efficacy and productivity of method had tended to overshadow the need for self-conscious reflection regarding the very nature of art historical interpretation. Figures such as Kurt Forster, James Ackerman and Svetlana and Paul Alpers called attention to “the weakness of art history as a critical discipline,” and felt compelled to chastise the art historians’ “old fashioned and naive notions of objectivity.”²¹ The ‘positivist’ self-conception, that very assurance in method that had been the prime characteristic of art history’s confident expansion, was, by the 1970s, beginning to be seen as a hindrance to a properly theoretical and ‘critical’ academic discipline.²²

As mentioned, even throughout the 1970s these criticisms remained somewhat tangential to the main concerns of most art historians.²³ This meant that in contrast to other more stridently ‘critical’ disciplines, art history began to appear ‘naive’ or unsophisticated in terms of its ‘scientific’ or ‘objective’ self-conception. When such self-criticism did begin to be registered in a much more insistent and vocal manner at the beginning of the 1980s, references to the ‘crisis’ of art history

¹⁹ M. Ranta, ‘Theories and Observations in the History of Art: A Comment on a Central issue Within the Philosophy of Science’, *Konsthistorisk Tidskrift*, 70:1/2, 2001, pp40-45; p40.

²⁰ See, for example, Kurt Forster, ‘Critical History of Art or Transfiguration of Values?’, *New Literary History*, 3:3, Spring 1972, pp459-470; p459.

²¹ As well as the Kurt Forster article above, see S. & P. Alpers, ‘*Ut Pictura Noesis?* Criticism in Literary Studies and Art History’, *New Literary History*, 3:3, Spring 1972, pp437-458, & J. Ackerman, ‘Toward a New Social Theory of Art’, *New Literary History*, 4:2, Winter 1973, pp315-330. The quotations are from the Alpers’ essay, p438 & p454.

²² S. Alpers, “(A)rt historians today, far from acknowledging that they live and work at a certain time and place, in the company of others...deny this in favour of a notion of objective historical research...It is characteristic of art history that we teach our graduate students the methods, the ‘how to do it’ of the discipline, rather than the nature of our thinking.” ‘Is Art History?’, *Daedalus*, 106:3, 1977, pp1-13; p9.

²³ It is notable, for example, that the early criticisms of the discipline of art history (referred to in the previous footnotes) were made in a journal devoted to literary history, not the history of art.

quickly became *de rigueur*.²⁴ Suddenly hyper-conscious and hyper-critical of their discipline's long and torpid "dream of scientific objectivity"²⁵ many 'new' art historians felt compelled to redress the balance quickly and decisively. The mantra that all scholarly discourse embodies an implicit theoretical position encouraged this new generation to be demonstrably self-conscious in regards to the 'theoretical positioning' of their own work.²⁶ Furthermore, as if shamed and embarrassed by the conservative and *retardataire* status of art history in comparison to other, more 'critical' disciplines, much of this new discourse was framed as an antagonistic and polemical riposte to the perceived theoretical inertia of 'traditional' art history.²⁷ By vociferously opposing the 'old', 'positivist' conception of the discipline, 'new' art historians positioned themselves, in effect, as ennobled critical and theoretical writers.²⁸ In the last decades of the twentieth century these trends coalesced and became 'mainstream' to such an extent that they engendered what is often now referred to as a 'new' period in art historical discourse.²⁹ Akin to an exercise in 'self-periodisation' then, this 'new' period in the history of Anglophone art history was, in effect, defined in opposition to that which went before it.³⁰

In this 'new period', as one would perhaps expect, Panofsky's work and its legacy was subjected to severe censure. Willibald Sauerländer indicates how this particular star had waned:

During the seventies and eighties Panofsky remained certainly present on the art-historical scene, but soon he became regarded as the burdensome father figure from a bygone period of humanistic scholarship...The admiration for his unsurpassed erudition, his brilliance, and his wit gave way to a vehement reaction against his approach to the problems of interpretation.³¹

²⁴ See, for example, Oleg Grabar, 'On the Universality of the History of Art', *Art Journal*, 42:4, Winter 1982, pp281-283; p281. See also Henri Zerner's 'Editor's Statement: The Crisis in the Discipline', in this same edition of the *Art Journal*, p279.

²⁵ Donald Preziosi, *The Early Years of Art History in America*, p148, n.11.

²⁶ For examples of writers who actively attempted to fill this 'theoretical lacuna' see, N. Bryson, *Vision and Painting: The Logic of the Gaze*, 1983; D. Freeberg, *The Power of Images: Studies in the History and Theory of Response*, 1989; N. Bryson, M. A. Holly & K. Moxey (eds.), *Visual Theory: Painting and Interpretation*, 1991; K. Moxey, *The Practice of Theory: Post-Structuralism, Cultural Politics and Art History*, 1994; N. Bryson, M. A. Holly & K. Moxey (eds.), *Visual Culture: Images and Interpretations*, 1994.

²⁷ A good example of this type of disciplinary polemic is Donald Preziosi's *Rethinking Art History: Meditations on a Coy Science*, 1989.

²⁸ Blake Stimson gives an interesting historical account of these trends in his article 'Art History After the New Art History', *Art Journal*, 61:1, Spring 2002, pp92-96.

²⁹ The conception of this 'new period' is perhaps best exemplified by, *The New Art History*, A.L. Rees & F. Borzello (eds.), 1986. See also, Jonathan Harris, *The New Art History: A Critical Introduction*, 2001.

³⁰ For an example of this consciously posited antithesis between 'traditional' ('positivist') art historians and the more contemporary, post-structuralist art-theorists see, K. Moxey, *The Practice of Theory*, op. cit., esp. pp1-27.

³¹ *Struggling with a Deconstructed Panofsky*, op. cit., p385.

Panofsky became a prime target because he was seen to have actively resisted the acknowledgement of his own subjectivity as an author.³² His writing is now often 'deconstructed', as critics seek to expound the subjectivity that informs his work. In fact (as is intimated by Sauerländer), Panofsky is now often held to account as the very figure responsible for the idea that art history could be founded as an empirical 'science', free from the need to consider its theoretical basis.³³ As the invective aimed at this 'naive' and 'traditional' conception of art historical practice became all the more pronounced and polemical, so too did the censure of Panofsky's work. Indeed, criticisms of Panofsky's English language scholarship have become so familiar and so pointed that there is now even reference to the trend of 'Panofsky-bashing'.³⁴

Keith Moxey is perhaps the most notable example of a scholar who takes Panofsky's American publications to task. Indeed, in a series of articles Moxey used Panofsky's work as an exemplar in his critique of that now disparaged American tradition of 'positivist' art history.³⁵ Moxey has consistently taken issue with what he sees as "the objectivist and quasi-scientific tradition of art historical writing that has its origins in (Panofsky's) work."³⁶ Moxey suggests that the rhetoric inherent in Panofsky's iconographical programme, with its "air of authoritarian finality,"³⁷ implies that art-historical interpretations can be presented 'objectively', and that the art historian can therefore consider himself freed from the need to consider the theoretical exigencies of his practice:

The tone of Panofsky's writings and those of many of his followers has a lapidary quality that suggests the reader is being vouchsafed eternal truths. Panofsky's rhetoric seems to imply that the meaning of a work of art is accessible to the

³² Writing specifically of Panofsky's conception of "the history of art as a humanistic discipline", Catherine Soussloff declares, "...its strength as myth is found in the resistance to the exploration of issues of identity and subjectivity in the discipline as a whole." 'Projecting Culture: Jewish Art Historians and the History of Art History', *Judaism: A Quarterly Journal of Jewish Life And Thought*, 49:3, Summer 2000, 352-357; p354.

³³ Stephen Melville, for example, has written, "With Panofsky we seem to step into an altogether different register, one in which the founding of art history is an achieved fact...we are then freed to imagine ourselves henceforth as scientists of a certain kind." 'The Temptation of New Perspectives', *October*, 52, spring 1990, pp3-15; p11-12.

³⁴ In 1990 the Dutch iconographer, E. De Jongh wrote, "Panofsky bashing...has been part and parcel of academic mass behaviour for some time now." 'De bijl en de wortels', *NRC Handelsblad* (Culture Supplement), 1990, p6. See also, Sauerländer, *Struggling with a Deconstructed Panofsky*, op. cit., p38.

³⁵ See, K. Moxey: 'Impossible Distance', *The Art Bulletin*, 86:1, December 2004, pp750-763; 'Motivating History', *The Art Bulletin*, September 1995, pp392-401; 'Perspective, Panofsky and the Philosophy of History', *New Literary History*, 26, Autumn 1995, pp775-786; 'Panofsky's Melencolia', in Moxey, *The Practice of Theory*, 1994, pp65-78; 'The Politics of Iconology', in B. Cassidy (ed.), *Iconography at the Crossroads*, 1990, pp27-31; 'Panofsky's Concept of 'Iconology' and the Problem of Interpretation in the History of Art', *New Literary History*, 17, 1986, pp265-274.

³⁶ *Impossible Distance*, *Ibid.*, p757-8.

³⁷ K. Moxey, *Panofsky's Concept of Iconology*, op. cit., p269.

historian in the same way regardless of his own position in history and that it is therefore possible for his interpretation to be valid for all time.³⁸

Moxey denounces this as a kind of rhetorical sophistry, the fallacy of which he seeks to expose in light of the fundamental 'deconstructivist' credo, that all knowledge must be acknowledged to be mediated.³⁹

As a scholar of the art of the Northern Renaissance, it should be no surprise that Moxey takes particular exception to Panofsky's work in this area. Although he does recognise the power of his predecessor's text on Dürer, Moxey criticises Panofsky's approach because, "his analysis is presented as historical 'truth' rather than as contingent historical interpretation."⁴⁰ Likewise, in an essay critiquing both the *Dürer* book and *Early Netherlandish Painting*, Moxey writes of how,

Panofsky appears to have no other ambition than to provide the reader with a wealth of information about the subjects under discussion. Both his texts are learned accounts of the available historical evidence, which is pursued with a relentless 'objectivity'.⁴¹

Panofsky's textbooks are thus considered prime examples of a 'traditional' art historical practice, in which the art historian concerns himself only with the empirically garnered 'facts', and remains ignorant, or at least naively unaware, of the theoretical presuppositions which inform his work.⁴²

In the work of Moxey, and others, Panofsky's "banishment of subjectivity"⁴³ in favour of a supposedly insipid and critically weak notion of scholarly 'objectivity' becomes the principal quintain in the critique of 'traditional', 'positivistic' art historical practice. The influence exerted by Panofsky's iconographical method, the fame of his English-language scholarship, and his lasting legacy, make him the prime target for the critical invective aimed at the 'traditional' conception of the discipline.

Panofsky and 'German' Art History

All this might seem like the natural consequence of the critical revisionism that characterises much modern art-historical discourse. That is, Panofsky, the figurehead for the discipline as it developed in

³⁸ Ibid. For this idea see also, *Perspective, Panofsky and the Philosophy of History*, op. cit.

³⁹ See particularly, *Panofsky's Melencolia*, op. cit.

⁴⁰ Ibid., p78.

⁴¹ *Motivating History*, p395.

⁴² In *Motivating History*, Moxey describes Panofsky's work as, "an art history absorbed by a positivistic obsession with information", p396; and in *Panofsky's Melencolia* he holds Panofsky's work as the example of that disparaged tradition of art history, "carried on in a positivistic spirit through empirical research." p65.

⁴³ *Motivating History*, ibid., p397.

the English-speaking world, becomes something of an intellectual pariah in the vehement reaction to this tradition. However, the understanding of Panofsky's career becomes somewhat more problematic when the full nature and the wider implications of this recent disciplinary re-examination are taken into account.

Concomitant with the critique of 'traditional' art history there has been a sustained re-examination of disciplinary practice. The self-consciousness engendered by the recent disciplinary critique has stimulated a comprehensive archaeology of the theoretical and epistemological foundations upon which 'traditional' art-historical practice *was* based. In other words, the realisation that theory was unavoidable has, over the past thirty years or so, compelled many writers to investigate just what theories art historians *had* been using, and what assumptions art historians *had* been working under whilst considering their work 'value free'. These developments have encouraged a thorough historiographical re-examination of the discipline itself, and a veritable publication boom in terms of writing about 'the history of art history'.⁴⁴

This disciplinary introspection has engendered a significant interest in the period in which art history was first institutionalised and established as an academic discipline; that is, in German-speaking countries from around the 1860s until the first few decades of the twentieth century. German art historians of this period are now often eulogised as exemplary figures due to their concern with providing an epistemological basis for the study of art. These 'grandfathers of the discipline', figures such as Aloïs Riegl, Heinrich Wölfflin, Aby Warburg and Max Dvořák are now subjects of interest because they fully engaged with the philosophical problems involved in a critical, historical approach to art. From a 'modern' point of view this early 'German' period in the history of the discipline has come to be regarded as a kind of 'golden era' because it embodied precisely those qualities considered lacking in 'traditional' art history of the Anglophone world.

This 'renaissance' of German art history was conceptualised in T.J. Clark's influential essay of 1974, *The Conditions of Artistic Creation*.⁴⁵ Clark looked back with some nostalgia to a period in which art history was a prominent, vital discipline, at the cutting edge of theoretical discourse within the humanities. He made the point that German art historians in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century had asked important questions about how art was produced, inquiring into the very nature

⁴⁴ For an insight into the abundant literature constituting this huge art-historical growth industry, see W. M. Johnson, *Art History: Its Use and Abuse*, 1988; U. Kultermann, *The History of Art History*, 1994; V. H. Minor, *Art History's History*, 1994; E. Fernie, *Art History and its Methods: A Critical Anthology*, 1995; D. Presiozi, *The Art of Art History: A Critical Anthology*, 1998; A. D'Alleva, *Methods and Theories of Art History*, 2005.

⁴⁵ T. J. Clark, 'The Conditions of Artistic Creation', *Times Literary Supplement*, May 24th, 1974, pp561-2.

of art and our reception of it; and he lamented the fact that the work of these German writers seemed lost and in many ways ‘alien’ to the majority of his contemporaries:

What an age was this when Riegl and Dvořák were the real historians, worrying away at the fundamental questions – the conditions of consciousness, the nature of ‘representation’?...It seems to me that these questions have been scrapped by art history now. And perhaps we ought to ask what made it possible to pose them at all...And why did the problems die? Why are we left with caricatures of certain proposals in an ongoing debate, arguments that have been miraculously turned into ‘methods’ – formal analysis, ‘iconography’?...(O)ne thing we badly need is an archaeology of the subject in its heroic period: a critical history uncovering assumptions and allegiances.⁴⁶

As with the criticisms of ‘traditional’ art history, it was not until the 1980s that the call for a critical archaeology of this “heroic” period in the discipline’s history became more widespread and ‘mainstream’ within art-historical discourse. Michael Podro’s *The Critical Historians of Art* (1982) can be read as answer to Clark’s plea for an archaeological uncovering of this important period in the history of art history. Podro surveyed the discipline’s formative years, examining how the ‘founding fathers’ openly engaged with the aesthetics and philosophy of figures such as Kant, Schiller and Hegel, and how they consciously confronted the theoretical and philosophical implications of their practice. Podro explicitly identified this as a particularly ‘German’ tradition⁴⁷, making an implicit, though fundamental distinction between this ‘German’ period of art history and the later ‘American’ period.⁴⁸

Following Podro’s seminal work, studies of art historians of the ‘German’ period mushroomed, and such publications now constitute an art-historiographical genre in its own right.⁴⁹ There has also been a flurry of translations, in books and journal articles, published with the explicit intention of making the work of these ‘Critical Historians of Art’ accessible, and available to an English-speaking audience for the first time.⁵⁰

⁴⁶ Ibid, p561. See also, H. Damisch, ‘Semiotics and Iconography’, *Times Literary Supplement*, October 12th, 1973, pp1221-2.

⁴⁷ In Podro’s words, “language here provides the relevant cultural category.” *The Critical Historians of Art*, pxxi.

⁴⁸ As Craig Hugh Smyth has pointed out, “For Michael Podro, in his book...‘The Critical Historians of Art’, the chief characteristic of American art history altogether is its ‘scientific’, ‘factual’, or in his terminology, ‘archaeological’ approach. He sees critical art history as almost exclusively European.” *The Early Years of Art History in the United States*, 1993, p6.

⁴⁹ The books and journal articles that constitute this ‘historiographical excavation’ are now so numerous that it would be impossible to provide an adequate overview here. Suffice it to say that there is now an established academic journal dedicated solely to the historiography of art history: <http://arthistoriography.wordpress.com/>.

⁵⁰ See, for example, A. Riegl, *Problems of Style: Foundations for a History of Ornament*, translated by E. Kain, annotation and introduction by D. Castriota, preface by H. Zerner, 1992; and A. Warburg, *The Renewal of*

Of course, the renewed interest in and 're-discovery' of these authors is not fashioned simply as a straightforward *rebirth* of this 'golden period' in the history of the discipline. It is well recognised today (at least by the more realistic historiographer) that figures such as Riegl, Wölfflin and Warburg were writing in a very different intellectual and cultural climate, and that it would be entirely impractical to expect their work to simply segue smoothly with contemporary discourse, filling a supposed theoretical void.⁵¹ It is rather the ethos of this 'German' period, the critical, theoretical spirit that permeates the work of these 'Critical Historians of Art' which is now considered exemplary; and the attempted 'resuscitation' of this spirit can be understood as a cautionary rejoinder to the supposed positivistic folly of the later 'American' period.

The historiographical renaissance of the discipline's German roots must be understood as an integral part of that reaction to what is now considered 'traditional' art history in the English language. There is a fundamental dichotomy, a basic difference in kind, posited between the early 'German' art history and the later 'American' art history. And in the historiography this is considered a qualitative distinction. From the contemporary point of view the 'German' theoretical, philosophical period is eulogised, whereas the 'American' period is disparaged as the unthinking ossification of this tradition.

The strange thing, in terms of the reception afforded Erwin Panofsky, is that, coincident with those critical and polemical attacks on his well-known American work, this scholar also features most prominently in the nostalgic renaissance of the 'German' period of art history. Indeed, the 'German' Panofsky is positioned as an essential figure in this critical tradition – an important theoretical writer, whose early German-language essays have even been held up as a kind of 'ideal' art history, to which contemporary writers should aspire.⁵²

Michael Podro, for example, used Panofsky's German-language work as the culminating point of his *The Critical Historians of Art*, taking care to note that the purview of his study ended in 1927 - i.e. *before* Panofsky's American period.⁵³ Michael Ann Holly then cemented Panofsky's central place in the 'historiographical renaissance' with her book, *Panofsky and the Foundations of Art History*.⁵⁴ This influential study was devoted exclusively to analysis of Panofsky's early German-language theoretical

Pagan Antiquity: Contributions to the Cultural History of the European Renaissance, translated by D. Britt, introduction by Kurt Forster, 1999. The historiography journal mentioned in the previous footnote is also intended to provide a platform for such translations.

⁵¹ Podro himself emphasised this point in an early article 'Art History and the Concept of Art', in *Kategorien und Methoden der deutschen Kunstgeschichte, 1900-1930*, L. Ditmann & O. Bätschmann (eds.), 1985, pp209ff.

⁵² See, Clark, *The Conditions of Artistic Creation*, op. cit. For an excellent summation of Clark's essay and his valorisation of Panofsky's German work see, Eric Fernie, *Art History and Its Methods*, op. cit., pp245-247.

⁵³ Podro, *The Critical Historians of Art*, op. cit., pxxvi & pxxi.

⁵⁴ M. A. Holly, *Panofsky and the Foundations of Art History*, op. cit.

essays, with the explicit intention of making the ideas contained therein accessible to a modern generation familiar only with the German scholar's English-language work. Holly's work can be understood as a response to the earlier lament of Svetlana Alpers, that "In terms of the intellectual history of the discipline our students are woefully uneducated. How many have been asked to read Panofsky's early untranslated writings?"⁵⁵ Holly shows how Panofsky's theoretical essays provide an important synthesis of the work of his intellectual predecessors, Alois Riegl and Heinrich Wölfflin; and she also situates Panofsky's work in relation to that of the cultural historian Aby Warburg and the philosopher Ernst Cassirer (alongside both of whom Panofsky worked in Hamburg). Ultimately, Holly identifies the 'German' Panofsky as an important critical writer, whose work is integral to any understanding of that 'golden period' of German art history. Following Holly's work a myriad of essays and articles dealing exclusively with Panofsky's early 'theory' have been published,⁵⁶ and the revival of interest in this scholar's German-language work is also clearly evidenced in the many English translations of what are now considered some of his most important essays.⁵⁷ This sustained historiographical attention is testament to the fact that the 'German' Panofsky is now widely regarded as a scholar whose work is stimulating and relevant from a 'modern' perspective. It would seem no exaggeration then, to state that interest in Panofsky's German-language work is a central strand of that "reawakening of critical interest among Anglophone art historians in the German roots of their discipline."⁵⁸

⁵⁵ Alpers, *Is Art History?*, op. cit., p9.

⁵⁶ See, for example, J. Elsner, & K. Lorenz, 'The Genesis of Iconology', *Critical Inquiry*, 38:3, spring 2012, pp483-512; A. Nehr, 'How Perspective Could be a Symbolic Form', *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*, 63:4, Fall 2005, pp359-373; A. Nehr, 'The Concept of *Kunstwollen*, Neo-Kantianism and Erwin Panofsky's Early Art Theoretical Essays', *Word and Image*, 20:1, January-March 2004, pp41-51; K. Lang, 'Chaos and Cosmos: Points of View in Art History and Aesthetics', in *Art History, Aesthetics, Visual Studies*, M. A. Holly & K. Moxey (eds.), 2002, pp47-70. See too, the eighth chapter of Margaret Iversen's book, *Alois Riegl: Art History and Theory*, 1993, entitled, 'Postscript on Panofsky: Three Early Essays', pp149-166.

⁵⁷ 'On the Problem of Describing and Interpreting Works of the Visual Arts', trans. by J. Elsner, & K. Lorenz, *Critical Inquiry*, 38:3, spring 2012, pp467-482 (orig. 'Zum Problem der Beschreibung und Inhaltsdeutung von Werken der bildenden Kunst', 1932); 'On the Relationship of Art History and Art Theory: Towards the Possibility of a Fundamental System of Concepts for a Science of Art', trans. by K. Lorenz & J. Elsner, *Critical Inquiry*, 35:1, autumn 2008, pp33-71 (orig. 'Über das Verhältnis der Kunstgeschichte zur Kunsttheorie', 1925); 'Reflections on Historical Time', trans. by J. Bauman, *Critical Inquiry*, 30:4, summer 2004, pp691-701 (orig. the epilogue to 'Über die vier Meister von Reims', 1927); *Perspective as 'Symbolic Form'*, trans. by C. S. Wood, 1997 (orig. 'Die Perspektive als 'symbolische Form'', 1924-5); & 'The Concept of Artistic Volition', trans. by K. J. Northcott & J. Snyder, *Critical Inquiry*, 8:1, autumn 1981, pp17-33 (orig. 'Der Begriff des Kunstwollens', 1920). The extent of the recent interest in Panofsky's German-language period is such that there has even been an attempt to reconstruct the content of his *Habilitation* paper. See H. Bredekamp, 'Ex Nihilo: Panofsky's *Habilitation*', in *Polyanthea: Essays on Art and Literature in Honour of William Sebastian Heckscher*, K. L. Selig (ed.), 1993, pp1-19.

⁵⁸ M. Rampley, 'From Symbol to Allegory: Aby Warburg's Theory of Art', *Art Bulletin*, 79:1, March 1997, pp41-55; p41.

Two Panofskys?

The rhetoric of this recent historiographical ‘renaissance’ makes explicit that the content of Panofsky’s German-language work, the ideas expressed therein and their significance, have had to be ‘rediscovered’. It is implicit therefore, that these ideas had been ‘lost’, and that they are not evident in Panofsky’s much more familiar English-language work. The recent urge to provide exegeses and translations of Panofsky’s early theoretical essays is founded upon the premise that this work is communicative of thought and ideas not previously available to an English-speaking audience. The implication being that this ‘German’ work is different in kind from the work Panofsky produced in America. Reflecting that dichotomy now posited between the ‘American’ and ‘German’ periods of art history, we are faced with the rather perplexing notion that there were somehow ‘two Panofskys’: the early (German) Panofsky – a critical, theoretical and philosophical thinker, held in high regard for his attempts to establish an epistemological basis for the study of art; and the late (American) Panofsky – now more commonly subjected to critical censure for his eschewal of theory in favour of a (supposedly) naive positivism. Indeed, the idea that there is a definite divide between Panofsky’s ‘German’ and ‘American’ periods has become a familiar trope in recent discourse.⁵⁹ As Keith Moxey observes,

The move from Hamburg to Princeton seems to have coincided with a profound change in his attitude towards history and method. Whereas Panofsky’s early career was marked by a restless theoretical search in which he continually essayed fresh methodological experiments, his career in the United States is marked by the attainment of a certainty, a conviction that the methodological problems with which he once grappled had been successfully resolved.⁶⁰

Michael Ann Holly reiterates this view when she writes, “[T]he empirical thrust of the American Panofsky’s research...might legitimately be regarded as a partial renunciation of his early speculative commitments.”⁶¹

Furthermore, it is obvious that Panofsky’s “much lamented abandonment of theory”⁶² is considered indicative of a profound deterioration in the standard of his scholarship, a decline in the critical

⁵⁹ See, for example, M.A. Holly, ‘Erwin Panofsky’, entry in *Encyclopaedia of Aesthetics*, M. Kelly (ed.), 1998, pp435-439; p436, & Y.A. Bois, ‘Panofsky: Early and Late’, *Art in America*, 78, 1985, pp9-15; p10. Irving Lavin is another who refers to the “mental shift Panofsky experienced after coming to America.” ‘Introduction’ to *Three Essays on Style*, 1995, p4.

⁶⁰ Moxey, *Perspective, Panofsky, and the Philosophy of History*, p777.

⁶¹ Holly, *Erwin Panofsky*, op. cit., p437.

⁶² Lang, *Chaos and Cosmos*, op. cit., p61.

ethos of his work.⁶³ Once more reflecting that historiographical schism between the ‘German’ and ‘American’ periods in the discipline’s history, the work of the early, ‘German’ Panofsky is now looked upon much more favourably, and is considered much more ‘relevant’ than the work of the later, ‘American’ Panofsky.

T.D. Kaufmann spoke for many when he commented upon how “remarkable” it was that a scholar such as Panofsky could eschew discussion of theory in his work in America.⁶⁴ Yet Kaufmann made no attempt to qualify this statement in any way. Nor, for that matter, has any other commentator. Panofsky’s ‘change’ is simply taken as a given. It does seem a rather strange matter of fact that, in the historiographical retelling, the work of this essential, critical scholar could suddenly become divested of merit and appeal, but the phenomenon of the ‘two Panofskys’ has not been addressed in any concerted way.⁶⁵ The majority of those who deal with Panofsky’s work and its legacy simply maintain the distinction between his ‘early’ and ‘late’ periods, treating in isolation *either* his early ‘theoretical’ essays *or* his later ‘American’ work. There has been no real effort made to analyse the reasons for what Kaufmann refers to as a ‘remarkable’ change. What seems *more* ‘remarkable’ to me is that at this moment in time – when a writer such as Kaufmann can consider his, and his colleagues’ disciplinary self-consciousness to be “healthy”, indeed, “salutary”⁶⁶ – such a surprising and perplexing incongruity regarding this most ‘famous’ and ubiquitous art historian, can exist at the very heart of the discipline’s historiography.

It is obvious that ‘something happened’ in terms of a change or development in Panofsky’s work following his migration to America. And, with the by all accounts paradigmatic nature of Panofsky’s work, it seems clear that the nature of this change reflects back upon the development of the discipline as a whole after 1933. The phenomenon of the ‘two Panofskys’ compels us to examine these developments in an attempt to understand what did happen. However, when we look to the existing literature concerning the migration of German art historians to America in the 1930s, the sense of miscomprehension is only exacerbated.

⁶³ See, for example, C. Landauer, *The Survival of Antiquity: The German Years of the Warburg Institute* (unpublished dissertation), 1984, p225-6.

⁶⁴ T.D. Kaufmann, ‘Review of ‘The Absolute Artist: The Historiography of a Concept’, *The Art Bulletin*, 80:3, September 1998, pp580-585; 580.

⁶⁵ M.A. Holly referred to this rather paradoxical situation, writing, “Ironically, the ‘first’ Panofsky – the one until recently, less familiar to his English-speaking audience – is the thinker whose ideas and scholarly protocol would be more congenial to the impulse towards critical revisionism taking place in the humanities today.” *Erwin Panofsky*, op. cit., p436.

⁶⁶ T.D. Kaufmann, *Review of ‘The Absolute Artist’*, op. cit., p581.

'Kunstgeschichte American Style'

Colin Eisler's essay, *'Kunstgeschichte American Style': A Study in Migration* (1968) remains the primary English-language source for understanding the migration of German art historians and their impact upon the discipline in the United States.⁶⁷ Although the migration was obviously occasioned by horrific circumstances, Eisler was keen to show that it had overwhelmingly positive consequences for the study of art in America. In fact, Eisler represents the migration as a wholly propitious episode in the history of the discipline. Expanding upon Walter W.S. Cook's pithy and oft-quoted aphorism, "Hitler is my best friend; he shakes the tree and I collect the apples,"⁶⁸ Eisler recounts how the American universities were primed and ready for the influx of the German-trained scholars, and how these émigrés received an overwhelmingly positive reception:

In large part this country really needed the experienced scholars who came over; there was room in the slowly but steadily expanding areas of art studies, art publications and art collecting to accommodate even the large numbers who came from abroad in such a short time.⁶⁹

Eisler notes the sense of academic self-assurance that the émigrés imparted through their approach to art history; a conviction in method, a professionalism, and a "high intellectual seriousness," that provided the inspiration and validation for the establishment and popularisation of the discipline in America:

[T]he influx of émigré scholars in the 1930s caused art historical studies in America to broaden in scope...with instruction and research moving towards a more intellectually challenging approach...Refugee scholars of the 1930's contributed towards the removal of a certain aura of preciosity and ever so upper-class

⁶⁷ C. Eisler, *'Kunstgeschichte American Style: A Study in Migration'*, in D. Fleming & B. Bailyn (eds.), *The Intellectual Migration: Europe and America, 1930-1960*, 1968, pp544-629. Karen Michels has published three excellent (though short) English-language essays that deal with the migration of German art historians to America: *Transfer and Transformation*, op. cit.; 'Art History, German Jewish Identity and the Emigration of Iconology', in C. Soussloff (ed.), *Jewish Identity in Modern Art History*, 1999, pp 167-179; 'Pineapple and Mayonnaise, Why Not? European Art Historians Meet the New World', in M. Zimmermann (ed.) *The Art Historian: National Traditions and Institutional Practices*, 2003. See also, Kevin Parker's essay, 'Art History and Exile: Richard Krautheimer and Erwin Panofsky', in Barron & Eckmann (eds.) *Exiles and Emigres*, pp317-325. These articles, although excellent critical essays, are somewhat summary; and each of them pays homage to Eisler's work. More recent in-depth scholarship on the migration has been published only in German. See for example, U. Wendland, *Biographisches Handbuch deutschsprachiger im Exil*, 1998; & K. Michels, *Transplantierte Kunstwissenschaft: deutschsprachige Kunstgeschichte im amerikanischen Exil*, 1999.

⁶⁸ This quotation is included in Eisler, *Kunstgeschichte American Style*, p571. Cook was Director of the Institute for Fine Arts at New York University, "the American institution which proved the most hospitable and invaluable to the refugee art scholar." p625.

⁶⁹ Ibid.

dilettantism which had long been assiduously maintained or cultivated in the world of art scholarship in America.⁷⁰

Noting this “democratization’ of art history”, Eisler suggests that,

...the sense of commitment brought over with foreign scholars may have encouraged able but less conspicuously ‘social’ or socially ambitious students to join a field which might otherwise have seemed uncongenial.⁷¹

Eisler was also at pains to point out that the émigré art historians themselves benefited from their experiences in the U.S.⁷² He referred to the “liberating qualities in the atmosphere of the American campus”, the “more open climate of inquiry in America”, and “the refreshingly breezy and irreverent interchange between student and teacher, so different from the frozen stratification of the German university”; all of which he credits as having re-vitalised and re-energised the émigrés in terms of their approach to scholarship.⁷³ Eisler also points out that the émigrés embraced the more pragmatic English language, and that they fully engaged with the positivistic spirit of academic inquiry encountered in America. He posits the idea that release from the propensity for incessant theoretical speculation influenced the work of German art historians markedly for the better, enabling them to play their part in forging a less-obtuse, more productive, and more efficacious era of art history:

The past 40 or so years of art historical scholarship has, by and large, addressed itself to highly specific, narrowly defined issues, questions to which a ‘Right’ or a ‘Wrong’ answer can be found. We have moved away from Hegel and Riegl’s neo-Hegelian *Kunstwollen*, from the murky depths of art theory into the unambiguous...reaches of Who? What? Where? When? How?...The recent questions of art historians have, by and large, reacted against the endless disputes in the realm of theory over which so many pages of ink were spilled in lengthy articles in the *Zeitschrift für Kunstwissenschaft* and other journals. The authors of some of these works, upon re-reading them, today claim that they are less than entirely sure what they meant when they were written.⁷⁴

Encouraged by the achievements and the characteristics of his discipline in 1968, Eisler described the migration as a predominantly straightforward, happy and mutually beneficial process.

As would be expected, Panofsky’s shadow looms large over the essay. Published in the year of Panofsky’s death it is obvious that this German scholar was considered by Eisler (as by most other

⁷⁰ Ibid., p611.

⁷¹ Ibid., p621.

⁷² Ibid., p624-5.

⁷³ Ibid., p603.

⁷⁴ Ibid., p605.

commentators) the model exponent of ‘*Kunstgeschichte American Style*’.⁷⁵ Indeed Eisler employed a selective reading of Panofsky’s own autobiographical account to reinforce his own portrayal of the migration as a mutually beneficial ‘success story’.⁷⁶ Most subsequent commentators have followed Eisler in this regard, reading Panofsky’s *Three Decades of Art History in the United States of America: Impressions of a Transplanted European* as a ‘rose-tinted’ view of his happy and auspicious ‘exile into paradise.’⁷⁷ It is often commented upon, in fact, just how enthusiastically Panofsky embraced his new environment; how happily he adapted and how contented he appeared to be in America.⁷⁸ In a reading of the German scholar’s autobiographical reminiscences one commentator even goes as far as to suggest that,

Panofsky had harsh words for the intellectual tradition that he left behind, and, with characteristic graciousness, praised the anti-theoretical – or non-theoretical – traditions of American scholarship.⁷⁹

Such readings do little to assuage the sense of miscomprehension that exists regarding Panofsky’s entire career. If the migration was an entirely straightforward, propitious and mutually beneficial process, then how are we to explain what is now posited as such a dramatic and deleterious change in Panofsky’s work? Are we really to believe that Panofsky somehow suddenly considered his scholarship to be methodologically ‘objective’ or ‘scientifically’ formulated? Did he simply embrace his new American intellectual environment and lose (or worse, knowingly suppress) his ‘critical perspicacity’? From a contemporary point of view, the received historiography concerning the migration – and Panofsky’s place within it – seems to beg more questions than it answers.

Re-evaluation

I would suggest that the time is ripe for a re-examination of the process of migration and its effect on Panofsky’s work. It is now over forty years since Eisler’s study. The son of two German émigrés, and himself the student of many of the great German-born art historians in America, Eisler based his

⁷⁵ Eisler’s describes Panofsky as, “the most distinguished of (the émigré art historians).” Ibid., p545.

⁷⁶ Erwin Panofsky, ‘Three Decades of Art History in the United States of America: Impressions of a Transplanted European’, first published in Crawford ed., *The Cultural Migration: The European Scholar in America*, 1953, pp82-111.

⁷⁷ See, for example, K. Brush, *The Shaping of Art History: Wilhelm Vöge, Adolph Goldschmidt, and the Study of Medieval Art*, 1996, p228, n.87; & J. Hart, ‘Erwin Panofsky and Karl Mannheim: A Dialogue on Interpretation’, *Critical Inquiry*, 19:3, spring: 1993, pp534-566; p565.

⁷⁸ C. Landauer ‘Erwin Panofsky and the Renaissance of the Renaissance,’ *Renaissance Quarterly*, 47:2, summer 1994, pp255-281; p271.

⁷⁹ David Summers, ‘Meaning in the Visual Arts as a Humanistic Discipline’, in I. Lavin (ed.), *Meaning in the Visual Art*, op. cit., pp9-24; p9.

analysis primarily on the results of an extensive survey through which he canvassed the opinions of the émigrés regarding their impressions of life and work in the United States. It seems eminently understandable that the answers supplied to such questions, and their interpretation by Eisler, would provide an overwhelmingly positive impression of the émigré experience in a country that had offered refuge from Nazi oppression and persecution. Even some thirty-five years after their arrival in America it would have been unlikely that any scholar who had forged a career for themselves and a life for their families in America would then provide an exacting, critical appraisal of that country, its intellectual traditions and the reception they were afforded.⁸⁰ An enforced intellectual acculturation is a complex and sensitive process, and any published reflections by the émigrés themselves would obviously be tempered by their understanding of the need to ‘fit in’ to their new environment.

History, however, does offer the opportunity for a more nuanced and detached assessment of this involved and difficult process. We are now at least one generation removed from the living presence of the great émigré art historians, and this historical distance seems conducive to a more objective evaluation of their experiences in America. General studies of the migration do now tend to emphasise the difficulties exiled scholars faced in adapting to what was after all a markedly different intellectual, social and academic environment;⁸¹ and in the case of the discipline of art history it would seem that a more sober assessment of the difficulties and compromises the émigrés faced, a more ‘historical’ understanding of their impact and the reception they were afforded, may also be required.

This study provides such an understanding through a re-evaluation of the effects of migration upon the life and work of Erwin Panofsky. It is a re-evaluation predicated upon an examination of Panofsky’s letters. The arch-humanist, Panofsky was a devotee of the epistolary art, and his correspondents included most of the major figures in twentieth-century art history, as well as many other notable names in American and European scholarship and education. The collection of Panofsky’s letters that survives constitutes a significant historical resource in its own right.

Letter writing functioned as an essential part of Panofsky’s professional life. His secretary in the 1950s, Roxanne Heckscher, has noted, for example, just how integral this letter writing was to the scholar’s daily routine. As Heckscher recounts, Panofsky would arrive at his office at 10.30am every morning and,

⁸⁰ The same point can, of course, be made in regards to Panofsky’s *Three Decades*, op. cit.

⁸¹ See, for example, Jean-Michel Palmier, *Weimar in Exile: The Antifascist Emigration in Europe and America*, 2006.

“...the first thing he did, and he was very speedy about it, he would open his mail and with great excitement, and proceed to answer everything he could, and most of the time it was a great deal...He did it on a daily basis - very rare - (and) nothing was carried over, except if he had to research something...Very often he'd get a letter, and the dictation would turn out almost to be an article.”⁸²

Heckscher goes on to note how after dictating in the morning Panofsky would then re-check and sign his letters that afternoon before they were mailed out: “He was very fussy about this kind of thing...” she recalls, “...they had to go out the day that he dictated.”⁸³

Letter-writing was obviously an important part of Panofsky's modus operandi as a scholar; it was something he did systematically and upon which he expended a considerable amount of time and effort. Examination shows that Panofsky would often annotate the letters he received, and those that he dictated would also be copied and retained for record. Furthermore, Panofsky's replies, despite the speed with which they were dispatched, were always carefully considered and composed. Even the more personal letters, those handwritten by Panofsky to his closest friends for example, are rarely offhand and never entirely informal. Indeed, the value and import Panofsky placed on his correspondence means that his letters are often dense with meaning and significance - to an extent that is certainly now rare in a world of email and instant two-way communication.

The prolificacy, worth and significance of Panofsky's letter-writing is now legend. As William Heckscher – a student of Panofsky in Hamburg, who became a close and trusted friend – opined of the letters of his former teacher,

“Their range and number remind us of the splendid epistolarium left by Erasmus of Rotterdam. Not unlike Erasmus's, Panofsky's letters were circulated among close friends for edification and instruction. Lucky those whose names were on this mailing-list!”⁸⁴

Wolfgang Stechow – another fellow émigré and lifelong friend – has also noted,

“Panofsky was ‘a man of letters’ worthy of comparison with the eighteenth century champions of the genre. Anything that arrived by mail – an inquiry, an offprint, a casual greeting – would bring a prompt and delightful response; the inquiry had started a train of thought, the offprint had been read with genuine interest, the greeting had evoked memories. Often, a more personal note would be added, a comment on the current state of the world or a discourse-in-brief on some scholarly

⁸² Roxanne S. Heckscher interviewed by Richard Cándida-Smith, *A Secretary's Recollections of Erwin Panofsky: Roxanne S. Heckscher*, recorded on tape in 1993. 'Getty Research Institute, Inventory of Interviews with Art Historians, 1991-2002', Acc. No. 940109. Container List Series 3, Box 3/1.

⁸³ Ibid.

⁸⁴ W. Heckscher, *Erwin Panofsky: A Curriculum Vitae*, op. cit., p7.

*problem that Panofsky was pursuing at the moment, and always as well-phrased, as full of wit and insight as his published writings. Such letters asked to be saved. Most of them have been (there must be many thousands), each small pile a private memorial to the recipient's relationship with an extraordinary man."*⁸⁵

It may have surprised even Stechow to discover that there are actually around 27,000 letters written to or from Panofsky in existence. The largest single collection is housed in the Smithsonian Archives of American Art in Washington, and was donated after Panofsky's death by his second wife, Dr. Gerda Soergel Panofsky.⁸⁶ However, as both Heckscher and Stechow indicate above, many of Panofsky's correspondents also felt compelled to preserve his letters, no doubt with posterity in mind.

Over the past fifteen to twenty years Dieter Wuttke – a German-born scholar concerned with the history of the humanist tradition – undertook the mammoth task of locating, selecting and publishing Panofsky's letters. Wuttke sourced these letters from the Smithsonian Archive as well as from individual private collections, and he has now issued an editorial selection of around 3,800 letters in five weighty volumes which span the entire course of Panofsky's lifetime.⁸⁷ Wuttke's impressive editorial undertaking provides, in effect, a chronological record of Panofsky's life and these publications have provided the impetus and the primary source material for my analysis of the American period in Panofsky's life. My research was further augmented by three weeks spent in Washington in 2009, consulting in person the Panofsky Papers held by the Smithsonian Archives of American Art.⁸⁸

Panofsky's correspondence is central to this thesis. His letters provide a remarkable historical documentation of the development of his ideas and concerns, and an illuminating gloss, as it were, to the understanding of his published output. Furthermore, Panofsky's correspondence often evinces the kind of personal and private insights which he did not necessarily consider suitable for

⁸⁵ W. Stechow, *Erwin Panofsky*, op. cit., p159.

⁸⁶ Erwin Panofsky Papers, 1904-1990 (bulk dates 1920-1968). Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution, Washington D.C. These papers were donated by Gerda Soergel Panofsky in 1979 and 1990. The majority of these letters, constituting what had been Panofsky's personal collection, have now been microfilmed and measure 19.3 linear feet in total. The 'Finding Aid' for the collection, written by Catherine S. Gaines (2006), can be found online at: <http://www.aaa.si.edu/collections/erwin-panofsky-papers-8926>.

⁸⁷ Dieter Wuttke (ed.), *Erwin Panofsky Korrespondenz: Eine kommentierte Auswahl in fünf Bänden*; 'Band I: 1910 -1936', 2001; 'Band II: 1937-1949', 2003; 'Band III: 1950-1956', 2006; 'Band IV: 1957-1961', 2008; 'Band V: 1962-1968', 2011. The fifth and final volume in this series was published after the research for my dissertation had been completed. There are, previous to the work of Wuttke, two other publications which focus upon the letters of Erwin Panofsky. See, Richard Ludwig (ed.), *Dr Panofsky and Mr Tarkington: An Exchange of Letters, 1938-1946*, 1974; and Volker Breidecker, (ed.) *Siegfried Kracauer - Erwin Panofsky. Briefwechsel, 1941-1966*, 1996.

⁸⁸ In this thesis, those letters cited from Wuttke's publications are followed by the number (in brackets) assigned them by Wuttke. Those unpublished letters cited from my own research in the Archives of American Art are followed by (AAA).

any published autobiographical account. Panofsky made many close friends in America, in both social and professional terms, and I have used his correspondence with figures such as Margaret Barr, Booth Tarkington, Charles Rufus Morey, Walter W.S. Cook, Millard Meiss and Rensselaer Lee to evidence what was, ultimately, a concerted engagement with and commitment to American life and scholarship. On the other hand, Panofsky's correspondence with his fellow émigré art historians – his earliest colleagues and students, his oldest friends and confidantes – is also given particular prominence. Letters to and from figures such as Fritz Saxl, Walter Friedländer, William Heckscher, Wolfgang Stechow and Richard Krautheimer – émigrés with a common set of experiences and a shared understanding of the role of the scholar, and the position of the university – are particularly revealing. Although it is clear from these letters that Panofsky was never anything less than genuinely committed to establishing himself in America, they do evidence a more nuanced reflection on the alterity of the American academic and social environments and the consequences of this alterity for Panofsky's career. Taken together, the selection of Panofsky's letters used in this thesis provides significant new insight into the exigencies of his process of acculturation; it provides the necessary context for a properly historical reconsideration of just how Panofsky's life and work developed in the United States.

There can be no doubt that Panofsky *was* a 'success' in America; and on the face of things he did assume the role of the happily acculturated European scholar.⁸⁹ However, we should not allow Panofsky's 'fame', his reputation, and his apparent 'contentedness', to mask the reality that his acculturation was a difficult and prolonged process, and the result of no-little effort on his part.⁹⁰ Indeed, it could even be argued that Panofsky's cultivation of his 'contented' persona was a significant *part of* this effort. Panofsky's letters reveal that he was extremely sensitive to the alterity of the American academic environment, and that he was fully aware of the concessions and compromises he was obliged to make in order to 'fit in' and establish himself. Indeed, this is what makes a study of Panofsky's migration so valuable and so enlightening. Panofsky achieved such prominence because he fully acknowledged and understood the differences between the German and American academic environments – it was his sensitivity to the process of *mutual* acculturation that enabled him (more so than many others) to successfully mediate between the two. Panofsky's life and work thus provides a valuable point of reference in regards the relationship between these two periods in the history of art history, 'periods' that now seem, almost by definition, diametrically

⁸⁹ Norman Cantor, for example, describes Panofsky in America simply as, "the prototype of the happy, highly visible professor." *Inventing the Middle Ages*, p176.

⁹⁰ My analysis is intended to provide an corrective to Cantor's rather facile assumption that, because "art history departments were so small and marginal when the great German émigrés arrived in the United States...(they) did what they pleased." *Ibid*.

opposed. A historical analysis of Panofsky's migration and his life in America – understanding the 'give and take' of his scholarly acculturation – will provide a more resolved understanding of this important period in the history of the discipline as a whole.

The study of Panofsky's migration and his career in America has one further significance. In contemporary cultural discourse it has become commonplace, indeed, almost routine, to encounter critiques of 'the humanist tradition'.⁹¹ It seems no coincidence that such a critical standpoint has come to prominence during a period in which the living presence of the great European humanists is no longer felt. If we accept that this 'humanist tradition' was made manifest in the English-speaking world primarily as a result of the migration of the 1930s, then it must also be acknowledged that this tradition was not simply imported 'wholesale'. Whereas the 'humanism' of the central European scholar was, as it were, 'bred in the bone' (a living and encompassing scholarly *Weltanschauung*), as émigrés they entered a markedly different intellectual, educational and social environment, and were faced with the necessity of having to adapt accordingly. It could be argued that modern critiques of 'the humanist tradition' are, in fact, a reaction to a *re*-presentation of this tradition, its circumscription and transplantation into an academic milieu that was distanced both geographically and intellectually from that in which it was originally formed.

Panofsky is often characterised as "the last of the great European Humanists"⁹² and there can be no doubt that he considered himself a representative of 'the humanist tradition' in America.⁹³ Indeed, Panofsky's conception of art history and his 'humanism' were inextricably intertwined, and fundamental to his attempted scholarly acculturation in the United States. Panofsky acted, quite self-consciously, as a living conduit in the transplantation of this tradition from the Old World to the New, and re-evaluation of his migration, therefore, offers valuable insight into this catalytic period of transfer and transformation; a historical understanding of the development of 'the humanist tradition' which can, in turn, better inform contemporary discourse.

⁹¹ See, for example, Sauerländer, n.31.

⁹² M. Iversen, 'The Discourse of Perspective in the Twentieth Century: Panofsky, Damisch, Lacan', *Oxford Art Journal*, 28:2, 2005, pp.191-202; p192.

⁹³ Panofsky makes this point explicitly in *Three Decades*, op. cit., p109.

Prologue: Panofsky in Germany

Panofsky's Humanism

Throughout his career in the United States Erwin Panofsky considered himself a representative of a 'humanist tradition' of scholarship.⁹⁴ The consistency with which he used terms such as 'humanist', 'humanism', and 'humanities' in America indicates just how significant he considered this tradition. Indeed, I would suggest that Panofsky's 'humanism' provided him with his principal point of reference and orientation in his encounter with the American academic and intellectual environment; in particular, with the alterity of this environment in terms of the position of the university, the role of the scholar, and the conception of the humanistic disciplines.

In the history of ideas however, the idea of a 'humanist tradition' has proven to be a rather nebulous concept. The terminology involved cannot be simply taken for granted; nor can it be assumed to have a generally agreed-upon applicability.⁹⁵ In order to evaluate Panofsky's life and work in America properly then – his process of 'acculturation' – it is necessary to first examine what this 'humanist tradition' meant to him; its contextual background, and the particular significance it had for Panofsky as a young Jewish academic in Weimar Germany.

The humanist tradition with which Panofsky so readily identified had its roots in the German *Aufklärung*, and the cosmopolitan, liberal ideals articulated in the writing of individuals such as Kant, Goethe and Wilhelm von Humboldt. This was a particularly western-oriented period of German liberalism with the principal figures profoundly influenced by the egalitarian ideals of the French revolution. In opposition to the absolutist rule that characterised the various German principalities at this time – according to which the individual was treated as a mere functionary or appendage of the state, and where the actions of rulers could often be arbitrary and capricious – German intellectuals emphasised the inalienable rights and the universal dignity of man.

The purest expression of this classical period of German liberalism was undoubtedly Kant's philosophy of human freedom. For Kant, the human individual was defined by his capacity for rational thought, and individual freedom was dependent upon the extent to which the individual made use of this reason. This self-conscious exertion of one's autonomy was, for Kant, the very definition of *Enlightenment*:

⁹⁴ Ibid.

⁹⁵ A. Bullock, *The Humanist Tradition in the West*, 1985, p8.

Enlightenment is man's release from self-incurred tutelage. Tutelage is man's inability to make use of his understanding without direction from another. Self-incurred is this tutelage when its cause lies not in lack of reason but in lack of resolution and courage to use it without direction from another.⁹⁶

Kant's motto of Enlightenment, *Sapere aude!* (*Dare to know!*), was a call to individual, responsible action.⁹⁷ It was a challenge to the individual to affirm his autonomy by thinking freely and critically, without slavish adherence to either political prescription or religious dogma.

For Kant, the 'enlightened' individual was primarily the scholar fulfilling his role within society, and in many ways the freedom Kant sought to expound was the freedom of the intellectual to write and to publish according to the dictates of his own reason.⁹⁸ In 1798 Kant published *The Conflict of the Faculties* – a collection of essays in which he proposed a reorganisation of the German University in line with his own liberal ideals.⁹⁹ Kant noted that the German university was primarily utilitarian in nature; a professional training school for state functionaries in Theology, Law and Medicine. These 'higher' faculties were the most esteemed due to their vocational nature; whereas the faculty of Philosophy was considered secondary. Kant proposed a complete reorientation of this hierarchy. He suggested that Theology, Law and Medicine were in fact limited by the extent to which they dealt with a 'truth' prescribed by the state, and he criticised the intellectual torpor of these faculties in that they merely passed on an 'authenticated' knowledge. Kant suggested that the faculty of Philosophy should be preeminent precisely because *it was not* tied to the utilitarian concerns and practical demands of state governance. Philosophy had no vested interest and was concerned only with the pursuit of learning for its own sake. As such, it was for Kant the only faculty that could, in itself, engender free, individual, *critical* thought, thus challenging preconceptions and advancing the frontiers of knowledge.

In deference to the ultimate reality – that man is neither omnipotent nor infallible – Kant's philosophy and his entire approach learning demanded that the individual scholar endeavour to maintain a detached, critical perspective towards all aspects of his knowledge creation, including their own presuppositions. For Kant, intellectual inquiry had to be recognised as an ongoing, cumulative and developmental process, propelled only through a disciplined and questioning critical spirit. In *The Conflict of the Faculties* he posited the idea that the university as a whole should be a principle organon in this process (and progress) of human *Enlightenment*; a research institution

⁹⁶ Immanuel Kant, 'An Answer to the Question "What is Enlightenment?"', translation by Lewis White Beck in *Kant on History*, 1957, pp3-10; p10. Originally published as *Beantwortung der Frage: 'Was ist Aufklärung?'*, 1784.

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, p5.

⁹⁹ I. Kant, *Der Streit der Fakultäten*, 1789. Translated by Mary J. Gregor as *The Conflict of the Faculties*, 1979.

characterised by its free, independent and ‘objective’ pursuit of knowledge. In this sense Kant’s work can be understood as a seminal statement in regards the importance of ‘disinterested’ research and critical scholarship (*Wissenschaft*).

Kant’s views were representative of a particular conviction held by German liberal intellectuals of the *Aufklärung* as to the benefits and worth of education. As part of that sanguine belief in the potential of human reason to facilitate an understanding of the world, and of man’s place within it, science and learning were considered innately melioristic endeavours. If ignorance be the root of all evil then education was held as the means to make the individual more virtuous.¹⁰⁰

This humanistic faith in the moral value of education found particular expression in the concept of *Bildung*. Going beyond the meaning of ‘education’, *Bildung* encompassed ideas of self-formation and moral and spiritual edification.¹⁰¹ At the core of the concept lay the liberal conviction that the individual, considered not as a means to an end, but as an end in himself, should be free to grow and to develop according to his own nature and personality.¹⁰² This educative self-cultivation was to be engendered primarily through the individual’s intense engagement with culture, and above all classical culture. Although a necessarily individualistic process, *Bildung* was not conceived of as some wanton abandonment to the vagaries of a purely subjective aesthetic experience. Instead, the development of aesthetic taste and sensibility were held as the means with which to bridge the gap between the development of the rational mind and the informing of the moral will, thus stimulating spiritual as well as intellectual improvement.¹⁰³

The individual’s approach to his cultural sources – literature, art, music, history – was central to the process of *Bildung*, involving not just a study of, but a deep personal engagement with the material at hand. The individual’s understanding (*Verstehen*) of his sources was made possible only through his personal experience (*erleben*) of them. Cultural material had to be ‘brought to life’, as it were, in a process of empathetic understanding. The individual was then ‘improved’, or ‘cultivated’ through his *experience* of the moral content contained therein. Furthermore, through his deep engagement with a variety of objective cultural values, the individual would develop a certain ‘universality’,

¹⁰⁰ See, H. B. Nisbet, ‘Was ist Aufklärung?: The Concept of Enlightenment in Eighteenth-Century Germany’, *Journal of European Studies*, 12:2, 1982, pp77-95; p81. See also, J. Schmidt, ‘The Question of Enlightenment: Kant, Mendelssohn, and the *Mittwochsgesellschaft*’, *Journal of the History of Ideas*, 50:2, Apr-Jun 1989, pp269-291.

¹⁰¹ W.H. Bruford, *The German Tradition of Self-Cultivation: ‘Bildung’ from Humboldt to Thomas Mann*, 1975.

¹⁰² In his *Wilhelm Meister’s Lehrjahre* (1795-6), Goethe has his main protagonist refer to the process of *Bildung* as, “...the cultivation of my individual self, just as I am”. Translated by Thomas Carlyle as *Wilhelm Meister’s Apprenticeship*, (1824), 1962, p274.

¹⁰³ See Raymond Guess, ‘Kultur, Bildung, Geist’, *History and Theory*, 35:2, May 1996, pp151-164; p161; & George L. Mosse, *German Jews Beyond Judaism*, 1985, p6-7.

becoming a more fully formed and holistic human being, and, therefore, a better citizen in the community of humanity. As Herder himself would describe the ideal of *Bildung*,

Man must grow like a plant, towards the unfolding of his personality until he becomes an harmonious and autonomous individual exemplifying both the continuing quest for knowledge and the moral imperative.¹⁰⁴

The liberal ideology of *Bildung* had a momentous impact upon the development of German society in the eighteenth century, providing an emerging middle class with a salient identity founded upon their educative and cultural pursuits. The correlation between education and moral edification endowed this *Bildungsbürgertum* with a meritorious identity and the means to distinguish themselves from the German aristocracy. Members of this *kulturell* middle class recognised one another on account of their ‘cultivation’, and the potency of this ideology of identity-formation meant German liberalism was imbued with an educative, cultural dimension from the outset.

At the beginning of the nineteenth century, the humanist principles of *Bildung* were enshrined within the German educational system through the liberal reforms of Wilhelm von Humboldt. As Head of the Section for Religion and Education in the Prussian Ministry of the Interior (1809-10), Humboldt provided an institutional framework for education and learning, within which the individual was to be allowed to develop according to their particular nature and potential. Although Humboldt’s reforms were based primarily upon the University of Berlin, they proved hugely influential and provided the blueprint for the reorganisation and reorientation of schools throughout the German states.¹⁰⁵

One of Humboldt’s first actions was to make the *Gymnasium Abitur* qualification the sole requirement for entry into the University. As such, the *Gymnasium* school was given a renewed prestige and standing within German society. Humboldt also abandoned any elective system at this high-school level. *Gymnasium* students were to receive instead a broad humanistic education for a full eight years, involving the study of Greek and Latin, history, classical German literature, and mathematics. Humboldt intended that every student should be given a comprehensive grounding in each of these subjects and thus, the opportunity to find and develop his own interests. Furthermore, students at the *Gymnasium* were to be instructed by qualified professionals actively engaged in research. These scholars were to lead by example, showing the student how to engage in a productive manner with their primary sources, and with the edifying and enduring cultural values

¹⁰⁴ Herder as quoted in Mosse, *ibid*, p3.

¹⁰⁵ The summary of Humboldt’s educational reforms presented here relies primarily upon David Sorkin’s seminal essay, ‘Wilhelm von Humboldt: The Theory and Practice of Self-Formation (*Bildung*), 1791-1810’, *Journal of the History of Ideas*, 44:1, Jan-Mar 1983, pp55-73.

contained therein. Ultimately, *Gymnasium* students would gain an intimate knowledge of their sources through close and exacting study; and through the example of their ‘teachers’ they would learn to be intellectually independent and responsible. For Humboldt, the high-school student was to be considered mature when he had “learned enough from others to be able to learn by himself.”¹⁰⁶

With the influx of such an informed and autonomous studentship the University could thenceforth be conceived of as an institution devoted primarily to the advancement of knowledge through research. Humboldt’s intention was that, rather than acting as ‘guarantors of knowledge’, simply passing on facts, figures and dates – an ‘authenticated knowledge’ – academics would purposefully base their teaching on their own research. This unity of teaching and research was designed to provide students with a further insight into the processes, the methodological problems, and the on-going, critical and individual nature of active scholarship. Supplied with various consummate examples of academic research, students were to be encouraged to realise the individual basis of critical scholarship, and to consider themselves responsible and autonomous learners in their own right, whose duty it was to actively contribute to the development of *Wissenschaft*.

Humboldt sought to engender this sense of intellectual independence and autonomy further by imparting to the student the sole responsibility for the nature and development of their own learning experience. According to Humboldt’s reforms the University student was free to determine the makeup of their own curriculum, and they were at liberty to move between different universities and to study under different professors, until they themselves decided upon their own particular specialism. The student was even afforded the responsibility of choosing the timing of their own examinations.¹⁰⁷ In accord with the liberal, humanistic precepts of *Bildung*, the encouragement and fostering of this sense of freedom and responsibility – in relation to the individual’s development, but also in relation to the scholarly process – was central to Humboldt’s educational reforms.

As with Kant, Humboldt believed that *Wissenschaft* in a holistic sense – that is, both the natural and the cultural sciences (or humanities) – should be fundamentally research-based and entirely free from practical or utilitarian concerns. Accordingly, although Humboldt’s University was to be funded by the state, the state was to play no constitutive part in determining either the nature and direction of research or the purposes of learning. Humboldt was adamant that the University would be an intellectually autonomous institution, and in the interests of academic freedom *Geist* and *Politik* were to remain completely separate. Again in a manner similar to Kant, Humboldt’s ultimate aim

¹⁰⁶ Sorkin, *Humboldt and Bildung*, p63.

¹⁰⁷ Friedrich Paulsen, *The German Universities and University Study*, translated by F. Thilly and W.W. Elwang, 1906, especially pp275-305.

was that the University be established and protected as a principle organon in the pursuit of *Aufklärung*. The University was to be conceived of as an arena for the self-development of free, autonomous, and responsible individuals; a conceptual, intellectual space within which individuals could communicate, on a rational basis, in common devotion to the advancement of knowledge and learning.¹⁰⁸

Humboldt's reforms at the University of Berlin, and their adoption as the blueprint for the reform of the German universities, provided an institutional endorsement, a state sanction as it were, for the position and identity of the *Bildungsbürgertum*. The strong connections between education, cultivation and moral 'improvement' meant that the German universities were henceforth charged with the spiritual edification of the German people. As Fritz Ringer has indicated,

German Universities had the standing of national sanctuaries...Like 'fortresses of the grail,' they were meant to have a spiritually ennobling rather than a narrowly utilitarian influence upon the disciples of learning and upon the nation as a whole.¹⁰⁹

Accordingly, throughout the nineteenth century and on into the twentieth, a university education became an important marker of status and prestige within German middle class society. As the German educationalist Friedrich Paulsen indicated at the beginning of the twentieth century,

In Germany those who have a university education form a kind of intellectual aristocracy...a kind of official nobility...[T]hey recognise each other, because of their academic training, as social equals...A person in Germany who has no academic education, is without something for which wealth and noble birth cannot offer a complete recompense. The merchant, the banker, the wealthy manufacturer or even the large land owner will occasionally become sensible of the lack of such an education, no matter how superior he may feel in other respects. The consequence is that the acquisition of an academic education has become a kind of social necessity with us; a person must at least have graduated from the *Gymnasium*, which would give him a potential claim to academic citizenship.¹¹⁰

According to the ideals of the *Aufklärung*, learning and scholarship assumed an unprecedented importance and influence within German society. The University professors, the humanists in particular, were thus afforded particular status in their role as rarefied culture-bearers. These "mandarin intellectuals" acted as the principal representatives and spokesmen for the educated, middle-class, 'liberal' *Weltanschauung*.¹¹¹

¹⁰⁸ Sorkin, *Humboldt and Bildung*, op. cit., p63.

¹⁰⁹ F. Ringer, *The Decline of the German Mandarins; The German Academic Community, 1890-1933*, 1969, p104.

¹¹⁰ Paulsen, *The German Universities and University Study*, op. cit., p119-120.

¹¹¹ See Ringer, *The Decline of the German Mandarins*, op. cit., p5-6.

'Humanism' and German-Jewish assimilation

The humanist ideals of *Bildung*, and their manifestation in the German school system, were of huge importance in the development of a salient German-Jewish identity. The *Aufklärung* was the period in which an ideology of emancipation was first forged in Germany. Those who championed emancipation maintained that participation in German education was essential for the 'regeneration' of the Jews and their successful assimilation into German society. Indeed, in many German states at the time of Humboldt's reforms, emancipation became conditional upon the Jews' subscription to the programme of *Bildung*.¹¹²

This was a condition that many Jews welcomed. Progressive intellectuals of the *Haskalah* advocated an end to the Jews' self-imposed segregation, and the liberal, cosmopolitan ideals of *Bildung* were embraced as a practicable and attractive means of enacting a hoped-for assimilation. As an idealistic, 'humanistic' philosophy of identity formation, *Bildung* held an obvious appeal; the emphasis upon the free self-development of the individual, enacted through education and cultural experience, presented the opportunity for Jews in Germany to forge an identity founded upon individual effort and self-cultivation.¹¹³ The same enlightenment idealism that provided the German middle class with their meritocratic identity (an idealism which placed a premium on the value of reason, tolerance and 'culture') was enthusiastically embraced by many German Jews as a means to transcend the divisions and difficulties that could result from the assertion of an identity based upon religious persuasion or national affiliation.¹¹⁴

Wealthy Jewish families seeking to assimilate into German society saw the *Bildungsbürgertum* as an appealing and viable social stratum. Emulating the social strategies of the German middle classes these families, from the late eighteenth century onwards, enrolled their children at the *Gymnasium* in an effort to partake of that prestigious educational status. Young Jews were thus inculcated, alongside their fellow Germans, with a deep knowledge of and reverence for the secular, humanistic values of western culture. This signalled the beginnings of a new, modern *Weltanschauung* for German Jews and a powerful identification with both classical and German 'High' culture.¹¹⁵ Furthermore, with the *Gymnasium Abitur* becoming the sole requirement for entry into the

¹¹² David Sorkin, *The Transformation of German Jewry 1780-1840*, 1987.

¹¹³ As George Mosse, writes, "The centrality of the ideal of *Bildung* in German-Jewish consciousness must be understood from the very beginning – it was fundamental to Jewish engagement with liberalism... (and) fundamental to the search for a new Jewish identity after emancipation... (H)ere was an ideal ready-made for Jewish assimilation because it transcended all differences of nationality and religion through the unfolding of individual personality." *German Jews Beyond Judaism*, p3-4.

¹¹⁴ Sorkin, *The Transformation of German Jewry*, op. cit., p20.

¹¹⁵ See Michael Meyer, *Jewish Identity in the Modern World*, 1990; & Keith Pickus, *Constructing Modern Identities: Jewish University Students in Germany, 1815-1914*, 1999, especially p1-35.

university, young German Jews were thus able to continue their secular education at university level, and to further partake of that social status and position associated with self-cultivation and scholarship.¹¹⁶

Of course, it would be an over-simplification to speak of a 'German-Jewish identity' in any generalised sense. Jews responded in countless different ways to the humanistic ideals of the *Aufklärung*. For some, the emphasis upon learning and scholarship was entirely consonant with their own Jewish traditions.¹¹⁷ Others chose to be baptised in a further identification with the society in which the cosmopolitan, humanist ideals of *Bildung* had taken form.¹¹⁸ For others still, identification with the secular principles of the *Aufklärung*, and a commitment to scholarship and *Wissenschaft* as 'enlightenment' itself, transcended altogether any religious orientation or affiliation.¹¹⁹ Such diverse responses provide a cautionary reminder as to the dangers involved with any retrospective apportioning of 'Jewish identity'. However, it remains the case nonetheless that for the majority of assimilationist German Jews there was a deep and profound identification with the cosmopolitan liberalism of the *Aufklärung*, and its manifestation in the humanist ideals of German education. As George Mosse has pointed out, the principles of *Enlightenment* and a 'humanist' ideology had become entirely consonant:

The religion of humanity had indeed become a secular faith, not dependent upon revealed religion – a faith, however, which took nothing on trust and whose truths were discovered only by a critical mind constantly refined through self-cultivation.¹²⁰

Panofsky's Humanism

It is in this historical context that we must situate Panofsky's 'humanism', and his deep commitment to 'humanist' cultural and educational ideals. Born in Hanover in 1892, Panofsky was the son of a wealthy Jewish rentier whose family had made its fortune in the mining towns of Upper Silesia.¹²¹ He was quite self-conscious in regards his family's long-standing association with Germany and he was

¹¹⁶ The number of Jewish students enrolled at German universities throughout the nineteenth century was proportionately far higher than the number of students of catholic or protestant background. For statistics, see Pickus, *ibid.*, p31, and Ringer, *The Decline of the Mandarins*, *op. cit.*, p136.

¹¹⁷ S. Beller, 'The World of Yesterday Revisited: Nostalgia, Memory, and the Jews of Fin-de-Siècle Vienna', *Jewish Social Studies*, winter 1996, 2:2, pp37-53; p51.

¹¹⁸ D. Niewyk, *The Jews in Weimar Germany*, 1980, p107.

¹¹⁹ Meyer, *Jewish Identity in the Modern World*, p29.

¹²⁰ Mosse, *German Jews Beyond Judaism*, p18.

¹²¹ Panofsky to William Heckscher, November 27th, 1961 (2763).

always keen to point out their connections with German ‘high’ society.¹²² By all accounts Panofsky’s was a typically ‘cultured’ Jewish family, and he was himself very much ‘cultivated’ from a young age.¹²³ His early, connoisseurial knowledge of classical music is well documented, for example,¹²⁴ and by the age of sixteen he knew Dante’s *Divine Comedy* and all of Shakespeare’s sonnets by heart.¹²⁵ Panofsky also held the works of Goethe and Lessing in the highest regard throughout his life, and these interests evidence his deep engagement with both classical and German high culture.¹²⁶ Panofsky received his early education at the prestigious *Joachimsthalsches Gymnasium* in Berlin, and he remained proud throughout his life of the fluency he attained there in French, Italian, and, most especially, Latin. Indeed, Panofsky believed this formative educational experience at the *Gymnasium* was of fundamental importance to his future career as a scholar. As he wrote in 1956,

“It is my honest belief that whatever value there may have been in what I have written and attempted to teach is essentially based upon the fact that I received a decent humanistic education before entering the university.”¹²⁷

Panofsky was certainly *au fait* with the Jewish background and traditions of his family. Indeed, he was rather proud that his grandfather had been “a great Talmud scholar.”¹²⁸ However, Panofsky did not observe Jewish religious custom as an adult. Though his ‘Jewishness’ was not something he ever sought to repress or conceal, neither was it something he chose to make a central part of his identity.¹²⁹ As the quotation above indicates, Panofsky was quite self-conscious as to the importance that education and culture played in the development of his own *Weltanschauung*. The identity that Panofsky chose to assume, and to assert, was that of the ‘humanist scholar’. Some commentators have suggested that the large numbers of German Jews who became art historians was a result of

¹²² Panofsky to Margaret Barr, April 16th 1933 (362); Panofsky to Lawrence Stone, March 3rd 1961 (2624); Panofsky to Wolfgang Panofsky, June 6th 1961 (2675) & Panofsky to Walter Schuchhardt, April 18th 1966 (AAA). In an interview sometime after his death, Panofsky’s long-term secretary Roxanne Heckscher would claim that he was almost obsessive about status and societal position. Roxanne Heckscher interviewed by Richard Cándida Smith, *Interviews with Art Historians 1991-2002*, Series II, Box II/4, Getty Research Institute, Malibu, CA.

¹²³ Panofsky referred to himself as “the only son of rather well-to-do and fairly reasonable parents who did not object to my taking up the unrewarding profession of an art historian.” Panofsky to Jozef de Coo, January 25th, 1955 (1752).

¹²⁴ For Panofsky’s love of classical music see, W. Stechow, ‘Erwin Panofsky and Music’, *Record of the Art Museum, Princeton University*, 1969, 28;1, pp22-25.

¹²⁵ Heckscher, *Erwin Panofsky: A Curriculum Vitae*, op. cit., p9.

¹²⁶ Panofsky to Ernst Gombrich, July 8th 1958 (2215).

¹²⁷ Panofsky to Stephan Hirsch, June 6th 1956 (1957). This was no empty platitude on Panofsky’s part. His appreciation of his *Gymnasium* education is also strongly evidenced in letters to, for example, Bruno Snell, June 10th, 1955 (1815), and Wilhelm Rieck, June 16th, 1955 (1819).

¹²⁸ Panofsky to Wolfgang Panofsky, March 25th, 1950 (1358).

¹²⁹ Panofsky’s son Wolfgang noted that although the family had some relatives who were orthodox, the religious orientation in their house was essentially zero. See Interview with Dr. Wolfgang Kurt Hermann Panofsky, by Charles Weiner at the Stanford Linear Accelerator Center, California; 15 May, 1973. Accessed online: http://www.aip.org/history/ohilist/4994_1.html, January 10th 2012.

these individuals making a professional commitment out of the cultural proclivities of their parents.¹³⁰ I would suggest further that, in Panofsky's case at least, his devotion to a life of 'humanistic' scholarship was part of a much deeper and quite self-conscious commitment to the cosmopolitan, liberal ideals of the *Aufklärung*. This was a commitment, moreover, that was of particular consequence for a young Jewish academic in Weimar Germany.

Over the course of the nineteenth century the cogency of the cosmopolitan, humanist ideals of the *Aufklärung* was gradually weakened in Germany as a result of a growing nationalist sentiment. Following the Reign of Terror, many German intellectuals became entirely disillusioned with the ideology of the French Revolution. Furthermore, the subsequent struggles with Napoleon's armies and the occupation of German lands by the French engendered a nascent German nationalism largely predicated upon anti-French sentiment. Indeed, 'French' or 'Western' enlightenment ideals, were increasingly rejected and disparaged as German intellectuals began to grapple with the idea of a particularly 'German' identity.¹³¹

This national feeling received important early exposition in Johann Gottlieb Fichte's 'Addresses to the German Nation', a series of 14 lectures delivered in French-occupied Berlin following Prussia's disastrous defeat at Jena.¹³² For Fichte, it was a common German *Kultur* – the language, the literature, the academic distinction – that provided the foundational unity of the German people in the different German states. He suggested that this collective *Kultur* could provide a moral succour and a sense of *spiritual* freedom for the German *Volk* at a time when they were under the military yolk of the hated French armies.¹³³ It was a shared *cultural* identity that, for Fichte as for many other German intellectuals, constituted the German *Volk*.

This was a definition of 'German-ness' that held an obvious appeal for the *Bildungsbürgertum*. The German middle classes largely supported the idea of a Germany unified through *Kultur* as this offered the promise of a future in which their own self-conception and societal standing would be sustained and affirmed. The German University professors – those spokesmen, as it were for the *Bildungsbürgertum* – became in many respects the most influential and vocal advocates of German nationalism. Enthusiastically supporting the vision of a country in which their own privileged position would be fortified, German academics used their scholarship and their considerable

¹³⁰ Karen Michels, 'Art History, German Jewish Identity, and the Emigration of Iconology', op. cit., p167.

¹³¹ Ringer, *The Decline of the German Mandarins*, p84. See also, H.B. Nisbet, 'Was ist Aufklärung?: The Concept of Enlightenment in Eighteenth-Century Germany', op. cit.

¹³² J.G. Fichte, *Addresses to the German Nation* (1808), edited with an introduction and notes by Gregory Moore, 2008.

¹³³ Humboldt's University reforms were also conceived of as a bid to bolster Prussia's cultural and educative prowess in the face of French military and political dominance. David Sorkin, *Humboldt and Bildung*, p65.

influence to promote the cause of German nationalism. Over the course of the nineteenth century the historical professions in particular developed as primary organs in the formation and propagation of this German national consciousness.¹³⁴ And with partisan scholars such as Droysen, Sybel and Treitschke appealing to the emotions and deep-lying proclivities of their target audience by actively creating the notion of a German *Sonderweg*, a German destiny, scholarship was put very much in the service of contemporary politics.¹³⁵

The clear motivations and avowed partiality of this 'Prussian School' was a flagrant subversion of the humanistic principles of disinterested *Wissenschaft*. However, it was justified on purely 'cultural' grounds. The Germany expounded by nationalist historians was a quasi-spiritual construct, an idealised cultural paradigm whose existence was posited as a necessity over and above the more base applications and practical interests of politicians. In their minds at least, the realms of *Geist* and *Politik* thus remained separate. It is significant too, that an undercurrent of anti-Semitism bled into this academic construction of the German nation. In Treitschke's vision of German 'cultural' unity, for example, the Jews were posited as a foreign and irreconcilably 'alien' imposition. Anti-Semitic prejudice was thus given intellectual respectability through academic sanction.¹³⁶

In the nationalist fervour and hubris that followed Prussia's successive military victories and German unification, history itself seemed to vindicate a conception of scholarship in which the primacy of the new German state and the propriety of its *Sonderweg* were primary concerns. The majority of German academics considered their own fate intrinsically bound to that of the Imperial State they had helped create. The cosmopolitan, humanistic ideals of the *Aufklärung* were well and truly supplanted, as a conservative and chauvinist nationalism became established as the new academic orthodoxy.¹³⁷ As Abraham Ascher asserts,

Insofar as German academicians under the Second Empire took an interest in social and political affairs, their orientation was in the main conservative and nationalistic. The events of the 1860s and 1870s, which brought about unification, profoundly influenced the country's intellectual elite. Not only did many repudiate their liberal political outlook and become ardent supporters of Chancellor Bismarck; a remarkably large number actually carried their newly acquired views into their

¹³⁴ G.G. Iggers, *The German Conception of History: The National Tradition of Historical Thought From Herder to the Present*, 1983.

¹³⁵ For a revealing analysis of the 'Prussian School' and its involvement with the cause of German nationalism, see, H. Flaig, 'The Historian as Pedagogue of the Nation', *History*, 59:176, June 1974, pp18-32.

¹³⁶ Treitschke's anti-Semitic views were published in a pamphlet entitled, 'A Word About Our Jews' (1880). See, E. Drummond, 'Heinrich von Treitschke (1834-1896)', in R.S. Levy (ed.), *Anti-Semitism: A Historical Encyclopaedia of Prejudice and Persecution*, 2005, p711-712; p712.

¹³⁷ George G. Iggers, 'Refugee Historians From Nazi Germany: Political Attitudes Towards Democracy', in *German Scholars in Exile*, A. Fait-Schulz & M. Kessler eds., 2011, pp213-227; p218.

academic work, which, as a consequence, tended to become less aloof and less objective.¹³⁸

This orthodoxy came to the fore once more in 1914, when German academics almost unanimously celebrated the outbreak of war as a renewal of national unity and of German 'spirit'. In what amounted to the mobilisation of an academic propaganda machine, an intellectual justification for the war was espoused (encapsulated in the 'Ideas of 1914'), predicated upon what had become a deep-seated conviction that German *Kultur* was distinct from and, indeed, morally superior to Western *Zivilisation*.¹³⁹ *Kultur* had thus been enlisted as a principle tool in the assertion of German propriety and moral authority, providing an intellectual rationalisation for the military struggle with the Western powers.

Even into the Weimar period, this conservative, chauvinist commitment remained the dominant department within the German university.¹⁴⁰ Many academics were shocked by Germany's defeat and dismayed by the 'western' democracy that emerged in its wake. The majority hankered after the stability and prosperity of the *Gründerzeit*, and in the work of historians in particular the strong leadership of Bismarck and the military conquests of the Empire were exalted and proffered, quite self-consciously, as an alternative to Germany's ignominious present.¹⁴¹ The many crises during the early years of the Republic only exacerbated the discontent. Even the more broad-minded academics who supported the Republic often did so for pragmatic reasons only, and mainly out of fear of a communist revolution and further social upheaval.¹⁴² In this tumultuous political environment academic discourse was particularly charged. As Wolfgang J. Mommsen has pointed out,

Political passions were high, and they affected the historical professions even more strongly than the public in general. In some ways the wave of nationalist thinking which had swept through the German historical profession during the First World

¹³⁸ A. Ascher, 'Professors as Propagandists: The Politics of the Kathedersozialisten', *Journal of Central European Affairs*, 23, 1963, pp282-302; p283.

¹³⁹ N. Elias, *The Civilising Process. The History of Manners*, Translated by E. Jephcott, 1978, p4 (original publication, *Über den Prozeß der Zivilisation*, 1939). See also Ringer, *The Decline of the German Mandarins*, p85-90, & Peter Gay, *Weimar Culture: The Outsider as Insider*, 1969, p95. This is not to say, of course, that academics in Britain and France did not also fully endorse the participation of their respective countries in the war – only that German academics were particularly convinced of their own particular stake in the war and of their role as the leading proponents of the moral and spiritual character of their country.

¹⁴⁰ C. Epstein, 'Schicksalsgeschichte: Refugee Historians in the United States', in *An Interrupted Past German Speaking Historians in the United States After 1933*, H. Lehmann & J.J. Sheehan, eds., 1991, pp116-135; p120.

¹⁴¹ W. J. Mommsen, 'German Historiography During the Weimar Republic and the Émigré Historians', in *An Interrupted Past*, op. cit., pp32-66; p35-6.

¹⁴² Gay, *Weimar Culture: The Outsider as Insider*, p24.

War now reached a new peak, and those who preached moderation were initially, at least, only a small group.¹⁴³

It was in Weimar Germany that the young Erwin Panofsky began his academic career. And within this febrile and partisan setting he held dear to the more liberal and enlightened principles of humanistic scholarship. Panofsky's greatest single influence in this regard was Ernst Cassirer. Cassirer was a neo-Kantian philosopher decidedly opposed to the nationalist hubris so prevalent within German scholarship. Throughout the late nineteenth century some German scholars in the neo-Kantian tradition had continued to propagate more liberal, cosmopolitan tradition of thought and as such they provided what Thomas Willey has described as, "a counterweight to the chauvinists...a counterforce against the centrifugal influence of German nationalism."¹⁴⁴ Cassirer was certainly of this mould, and at the height of the nationalist fervour of the First World War he published *Freiheit und Form*, a study of German intellectual history that focussed upon the contribution of German thinkers to the western 'humanist tradition'.¹⁴⁵ Cassirer drew particular attention to the more pacific, tolerant and cosmopolitan traditions of German thought, with especial prominence given to the 'classical' period of eighteenth-century liberalism, and in so doing, he endeavoured to provide an alternative to the narrower, more chauvinist viewpoints which understood German history only in terms of its uniqueness and propriety.¹⁴⁶ The cosmopolitan thrust and tenor of *Freiheit und Form* placed Cassirer very much in the minority among German academics, and his work was subject to severe and pointed criticism from his more 'patriotic' colleagues.¹⁴⁷ However this dignified philosopher remained composed and objective, and true to the principles of 'disinterested' humanistic scholarship.¹⁴⁸

Cassirer provided his own contribution to the 'humanist tradition' of thought during the Weimar period with his *Philosophy of Symbolic Forms*.¹⁴⁹ Cassirer conceived of cultural or 'symbolic' forms – myth, language, religion, art, science – as mediating, orienting structures, created by man in his attempt to come to terms with his experience of reality. Setting out from the neo-Kantian premise that all we ever really experience is the productivity of our own minds, these 'symbolic forms' were, for Cassirer, quite literally, the evidence of man's ability to *make sense* of the world. This capacity for

¹⁴³ Mommsen, *German Historiography During the Weimar Republic*, p35.

¹⁴⁴ Ibid., p155 & p110.

¹⁴⁵ E. Cassirer, *Freiheit und Form*, 1916.

¹⁴⁶ See, D. Gawronsky, 'Cassirer: His Life and His Work', in *The Philosophy of Ernst Cassirer*, P.A. Schilpp (ed.), p3-37; p23. See also, D. Lipton, *Ernst Cassirer: The Dilemma of a Liberal Intellectual in Germany, 1914-1933*, 1978; especially p44.

¹⁴⁷ Lipton, *ibid.*, p57.

¹⁴⁸ In a letter to Paul Natorp, dated November 26th 1916, Cassirer made the point that anyone in Germany, whether Jewish or not, would be sensitive to an accusation of being 'un-patriotic'. *Ibid.*, p54.

¹⁴⁹ *The Philosophy of Symbolic Forms*, 3 vols. Translated by R. Mannheim, 1953-7 (Originally, vol. 1 1923, vol. 2 1925, vol. 3, 1929).

cultural creation was conceived of as the human distinction, the human *achievement* par excellence and Cassirer thus developed Kant's 'Critique of Reason' into a 'Critique of Culture'.¹⁵⁰

Cassirer conceived of the multidisciplinary and historical analysis of the various 'symbolic' forms as the means to trace the progress of human civilisation. According to Cassirer's philosophy, the more man became self-aware as to the constituent part he himself played in his experience of reality, that is, the extent to which he recognised the 'symbolic' nature of his own cultural creations, the more possible became the realisation of human freedom and autonomy:

Human culture taken as a whole may be described as the process of man's progressive self-liberation. Language, art, religion, science, are various phases in this process. In all of them man discovers and proves a new power – the power to build up a new world of his own, an 'ideal' world.¹⁵¹

This philosophical anthropology envisioned the study of culture as a means of understanding the human condition. In the best traditions of the Enlightenment this was 'humanistic' scholarship conceived of as self-understanding.

Furthermore, By theorizing the over-arching *functional* nature of the 'symbolic forms' – i.e. the idea that myth, language, religion, science, art, philosophy, history, *nation* even, are all 'man-made' – Cassirer was providing a universal and 'objective' platform for understanding the human experience in all its variety.¹⁵² As such this was a philosophy that operated over and above the narrow confines of any approach that sought to understand mankind from a more 'particular' perspective; be it religion, nationality, or race. Cassirer's very approach transcended the narrow cultural chauvinism that was then dominant within the German university.

Cassirer's philosophy symbolised the spirit of the new Republic, a republic that quite intentionally harked back to "the humanist philosophy and pacific cosmopolitanism" of Goethe, Schiller, Kant, Humboldt et al.¹⁵³ Despite his existent reputation, Cassirer only achieved his first Professorial appointment at Hamburg University in 1919. This was a new institution born of the Republic and unfettered by the conservative and anti-Semitic traditions long established elsewhere in Germany. Indeed, Cassirer would eventually become rector of this University, the first Jew ever to hold such a

¹⁵⁰ As Cassirer wrote, "Language and the arts, myth and theoretical knowledge...are the great stages on the way which leads from the space of grasping and doing, wherein the animal lives and remains, as it were, imprisoned, to the space of intuition and thought, to that of the spiritual 'horizon'." "Spirit' and 'Life' in Contemporary Philosophy", 1930, in *The Philosophy of Ernst Cassirer*, op. cit., p857-880; p874.

¹⁵¹ E. Cassirer, *An Essay on Man*, p228.

¹⁵² Ibid., p67-8

¹⁵³ Gay, *Weimar Culture*, p1, & on Cassirer, pp33-4. See also, Lipton, *The Dilemma of a Liberal Intellectual*, p101.

position in Germany, and he remained a vocal supporter of the Republic throughout its short and turbulent history.

It was in Hamburg too, that Panofsky began his career as a scholar. He started working at the University the year after Cassirer and was made full Professor of the History of Art in 1926 – one of only three Jews to hold this position in Germany.¹⁵⁴ Like Cassirer, Panofsky was appreciative of the possibilities and potential of the new Republic and he too was an avowed supporter of Weimar democracy.¹⁵⁵

Cassirer, the eminent and distinguished philosopher steeped in the humanist tradition, exerted a profound influence upon the young Panofsky, and the two men became close friends as well as professional collaborators.¹⁵⁶ At the time when Cassirer was formulating his *Philosophy of Symbolic Forms*, Panofsky even saw fit to attend his colleague's lectures. Carl Landauer points out that it was extremely rare at this time for one Faculty member to attend the lectures of another, and this indicates the kind of pull Cassirer's work exerted on Panofsky.¹⁵⁷ Panofsky would himself testify to this momentous influence later in life, describing Cassirer as, "The only German philosopher of our generation who to the cultured was a substitute for the Church"¹⁵⁸ – a quite telling pronouncement for an 'enlightened' German Jew. Cassirer's comprehensive 'humanistic' philosophy provided the young Panofsky with a rigorous intellectual framework for his understanding of the history of art as a humanistic discipline. And the art historian's work in Hamburg should be understood as an affirmation of and a contribution to Cassirer's philosophical programme.¹⁵⁹

In Hamburg Panofsky and Cassirer were both hugely influenced by the work of Aby Warburg. Warburg was the eldest son of a wealthy Jewish banking family who had chosen to follow the life of an independent scholar. He famously relinquished the inheritance of the extensive family business to his younger brother, asking only that he never be refused financial aid in the purchasing of books. With what amounted to a rather large blank cheque, Warburg established a huge collection of

¹⁵⁴ The others were Paul Frankl at Halle, and Adolph Goldschmidt at Berlin.

¹⁵⁵ Wolfgang Panofsky recalled his father lecturing him on "the greatness and legitimacy of elected governments." J. Hart, *Erwin Panofsky and Karl Mannheim*, op. cit., p561, n.67. Panofsky would also later suggest that during the Weimar period, "Germany had the best constitution in the world." Panofsky to Booth Tarkington, February 22nd 1946 (1072).

¹⁵⁶ Landauer describes Panofsky and Cassirer as "kindred spirits." *The Survival of Antiquity*, p226.

¹⁵⁷ Landauer, *Ibid.*, p224.

¹⁵⁸ Heckscher, *Erwin Panofsky: A Curriculum Vitae*, op. cit., p12. See also, Panofsky to Heckscher, June 4th, 1945 (1008).

¹⁵⁹ The most pertinent examples in this regard would be Panofsky's *Idea* (1924) and his *Die Perspektive als Symbolische Form* (1927). For discussion of this point see, K. Gilbert, 'Cassirer's Placement of Art', in *The Philosophy of Ernst Cassirer*, op. cit., pp607-630; p624. For a more recent and critical assessment of Panofsky's appropriation of Cassirer's philosophy, see Hubert Damisch, *The Origin of Perspective*, especially pp11-20; and Christopher Wood's 'Introduction', to Panofsky's *Perspective as Symbolic Form*, 1991, pp7-24; especially p14.

historical source material; an extensive personal library that was organised as a mapping out of human cultural practices. Largely under the guidance of Fritz Saxl, Warburg's Library was developed in the mid-20s into the *Kulturwissenschaftliche Bibliothek Warburg (KBW)*, a private research institution devoted to the multidisciplinary study of human culture.¹⁶⁰ As one commentator has recently surmised,

Most broadly stated, the goal of Warburg's research was an attempted synthesis of art and cultural history with the purpose of delineating the changing nature of humanity's intellectual orientation. In particular, Warburg sought to understand the influence of pagan antiquity on the European intellectual makeup in all its forms – from art and literature, to science and jurisprudence. Over a period of many years of 'arduous wandering through the world of the symbol,' he pursued the ideas and psychological mechanisms that accounted for the existence of art, literature, myth, religion and science.¹⁶¹

There was a remarkable ready-made congruence between Warburg's view of *Kulturwissenschaft* and Cassirer's multi-disciplinary humanistic philosophy.¹⁶² Cassirer was himself astounded by this correspondence upon his first visit to the library in 1920.¹⁶³ The very organisation of Warburg's library seemed to Cassirer a corroboration of his own philosophical understanding of the symbol, and it provided him with the impetus to formalise his own *Philosophy of Symbolic Forms*.¹⁶⁴ Indeed, Warburg's huge collection of sources documenting human cultural practices provided Cassirer with the concrete historical material, the empirical evidence with which to elucidate and illustrate his idealistic philosophy.¹⁶⁵

Warburg's library and his approach to art and visual imagery held a deep resonance for Panofsky also. Conceiving of art as a symbolic expression of the human spirit, Warburg's 'Iconology' involved tracing the development of iconographic themes and pictorial motifs in terms of what these developments could reveal about human thought and human experience. Warburg sought to take the history of art beyond what he considered a narrow preoccupation with form, and towards an

¹⁶⁰ Warburg was prone to bouts of severe mental illness. It was during one of these periods, when Warburg was absent, that Saxl transformed the Library into a functioning research institute. For details see, D. McEwan, 'The Enemy of Hypothesis': Fritz Saxl as Acting Director of the Bibliothek Warburg', *Yearbook of the Leo Baeck Institute*, 49:1, January 2004, pp75-86.

¹⁶¹ Mark A. Russell, *Between Tradition and Modernity: Aby Warburg and the Public Purposes of Art in Hamburg, 1896-1918*, 2007, p22.

¹⁶² See, J. Habermas, 'The Liberating Power of Symbols: Ernst Cassirer's Humanistic Legacy and the Warburg Library', in Habermas, *The Liberating Power of Symbols: Philosophical Essays*, 2001, pp1-29.

¹⁶³ F. Saxl, 'Ernst Cassirer' in *The Philosophy of Ernst Cassirer*, op. cit., pp47-51; p48.

¹⁶⁴ E. Cassirer, 'Preface' to *The Philosophy of Symbolic Forms*, Vol.2, *Mythical Thought*, 1924, translated by Ralph Mannheim, 1955, p xviii.

¹⁶⁵ E. Skidelsky, *Ernst Cassirer: The Last Philosopher of Culture*, 2008, p94.

understanding of human 'significance'.¹⁶⁶ Panofsky had taken issue with aspects of Wölfflin's formalism even before he arrived in Hamburg, and the influence of Warburg gave further impetus to his conception of the history of art as a history of meaning.¹⁶⁷ Ultimately, Warburg's vision of *Kulturwissenschaft* further augmented Panofsky's understanding of art history as an important anthropological discipline. And, as it had for Cassirer, Warburg's library offered Panofsky the concrete historical source material with which to conduct his own research and scholarship.

Cassirer and Panofsky used the *KBW* regularly for the purposes of research but also in their teaching for the University. They also became fundamentally involved in the day to day activities and the publications of the institution.¹⁶⁸ By 1929 Panofsky and Cassirer had been made members of the *Kuratorium* of the *KBW*, and Warburg and Saxl held honorary professorships at the University. Together these Jewish intellectuals formed what could be termed the Hamburg circle. It is important to point out that there were differences among these scholars. Together, Warburg, Cassirer, Panofsky and Saxl did not form a 'school' in any strict methodological sense. Nor did they embody an overt political perspective in their work; as, for example, did the Marxist 'Frankfurt School'.¹⁶⁹ However, there most certainly was a unity of purpose among this group.¹⁷⁰ They considered themselves as collaborators, involved together in a common project of 'humanistic' scholarship.

The unanimity of this Hamburg circle, in terms of the common aims, outlook and rationale of their scholarship, is perhaps best represented by Ernst Cassirer's *The Individual and the Cosmos in Renaissance Philosophy*.¹⁷¹ Cassirer opened this study with a dedication to Warburg, on the joint

¹⁶⁶ See, for example, Warburg's 'Italian Art and International Astrology in the Palazzo Schifanoia, Ferrara', (1912), translated by David Britt in *The Renewal of Pagan Antiquity*, op. cit., pp732-591.

¹⁶⁷ Panofsky, *Das Problem des Stil in der bildenden Kunst*, 1915.

¹⁶⁸ From the period 1921-32, Cassirer published four works in the *KBW* journal; as well as seven publications issued as *Vorträge der Bibliothek Warburg*. In addition to *Perspective as Symbolic Form*, and *Idea*, (Vols. 4 & 5 of the *Vorträge* respectively), Panofsky also published *Dürer's Melencolia I* (1923; in collaboration with Saxl), and *Hercules am Scheidewege und andere antike Bildstoffe in der neueren Kunst* (1930) under the auspices of the *KBW*.

¹⁶⁹ Indeed, recent commentators are more likely now to draw attention to the differences that existed between the approaches of these various individuals; especially in regards the 'faithfulness' of Panofsky's and Saxl's interpretation of Warburg's scholarly *Weltanschauung*. See, for example, R. Woodfield, 'Warburg's "Method"', in *Art History as Cultural History: Warburg's Projects*, Richard Woodfield ed., 2001, pp259-293; K. Lippincott, 'Urania redux: A View of Aby Warburg's Writings on Astrology and Art', *Art History as Cultural History*, (ibid), pp151-182; especially p153-156; M. Iversen, 'Retrieving Warburg's Tradition', *Art History*, 16, 1993, pp541-553; and Georges Didi-Huberman, 'Artistic Survival: Panofsky vs. Warburg and the Exorcism of Impure Time', *Common Knowledge*, 9:2, 2003, pp273-285; especially p278ff.

¹⁷⁰ See, Emily Jane Levine, *Culture, Commerce, and the City: Aby Warburg, Ernst Cassirer, and Erwin Panofsky in Hamburg, 1919-1933* (unpublished dissertation), 2008, esp. p15-72; Landauer, *The Survival of Antiquity*, op. cit. & S. Ferretti, *Cassirer, Panofsky, and Warburg*, 1984.

¹⁷¹ E. Cassirer *Der Individuum und Kosmos in der Philosophie der Renaissance*. published in 1927, as volume 10 of the *Studien der Bibliothek Warburg*. Translated by Mario Domandi as *The Individual and the Cosmos in Renaissance Philosophy*, 1963. All subsequent references are to the 1963 translation.

occasion of the sixtieth birthday of this “dear and esteemed friend”, and the opening of the new building in which the *KBW* was to be housed. As Cassirer continued,

The work I am presenting to you...was to have been a purely personal expression of my deep friendship and devotion. But I could not have completed the work, had I not been able to enjoy the constant stimulation and encouragement of that group of scholars whose intellectual centre is your library. Therefore I am speaking today not in my name alone, but in the name of this group of scholars...For the past three decades, the Warburg Library has quietly and consistently endeavoured to gather materials for research in intellectual and cultural history. And it has done much more besides. With a forcefulness that is rare, it has held up before us the principles which must govern such research. In its organisation and in its intellectual structure, the library embodies the idea of the methodological unity of all fields and all currents of intellectual history...On this occasion we members want to express publicly how much the Library means to us and how much we owe to it. We hope, and we are sure, that above and beyond the new tasks which the library must fulfil, the old tradition of our common, friendly collaboration will not be forgotten, and that the intellectual and personal bond that has hitherto held us together will become ever stronger.¹⁷²

In the main body of the text, Cassirer went on to provide many references to the work of Warburg, Panofsky and Saxl; exhibiting in material form the intellectual harmony that existed among this group of scholars at the *KBW*.¹⁷³

Cassirer situated *The Individual and the Cosmos in Renaissance Philosophy* directly in the lineage of Jacob Burckhardt,¹⁷⁴ a scholar described as “the secular patron saint of the (KBW).”¹⁷⁵ Cassirer was intent upon defining ‘The Renaissance’ as a historical period. He wanted to show that during this ‘period’ a new anthropocentric philosophy had begun to engender the notion that man’s moral and intellectual efforts could enable him to forge and to shape his own destiny. For Cassirer, this constituted a first departure from ‘medieval’, theological ideas of predestination and divine providence, and evidenced the beginnings of a new conception of free will and human autonomy. Cassirer used Pico’s *Oration on the Dignity of Man* to summarise “with grand simplicity and in

¹⁷² *The Individual and the Cosmos*, pxiii.

¹⁷³ The work of Warburg is mentioned on pgs. 75, 76, 77, 105 & 169; Panofsky is referenced on pgs. 31, 101, 114, 163, 165 & 182; and Saxl on pgs. 101, 114 & 163

¹⁷⁴ *The Individual and the Cosmos*, p3-4.

¹⁷⁵ H. Liebeschütz, ‘Aby Warburg (1866-1929) As Interpreter of Civilisation’, *Leo Baeck Institute Yearbook*, 16:1, January 1971, pp225-236; p234. Liebeschütz points out that a bust of the Swiss scholar sat prominently on the desk of Aby Warburg.

pregnant form the whole intent of the Renaissance and its entire concept of knowledge.”¹⁷⁶ In particular, Cassirer cited Pico’s re-telling of the creation myth and God speaking unto Adam:

You alone are bound by no limit unless it be one prescribed by your will, which I have given you. I have placed you at the centre of the world, so that you may more easily look around you and see everything that is in it. I created you as a being...so that you may freely make and master yourself, and take on any form you choose for yourself. You can denigrate to animality or be reborn towards divinity...Animals bring forth...from the bodies of their mothers everything they ought to have. The higher spirits are, from the beginning or soon afterwards, everything they will be for eternity. But on man, the Father conferred, at the moment of birth, the seeds and germs of every form of life. Those which he cultivates will grow in him and bear fruit. If they are the plant seeds, he will vegetate; if he follows the senses, he will become an animal; if he cultivates the power of reason within him, he will become a celestial creature; if he follows intelligence, he will become an angel and a son of God.¹⁷⁷

Although Cassirer’s main focus was on philosophy he utilised the ‘humanistic’ organisation of Warburg’s Library to provide a multi-disciplinary understanding of this ‘period’. Integral to the new *Weltanschauung* that Cassirer perceived in the Renaissance was the emergence of a modern ‘scientific’ outlook, a newly rationalised conception of the natural world based upon individual observation and verifiable experiment. Cassirer demonstrated that it was the artists of the Renaissance who first pioneered this inquisitive and critical approach to nature, in their attempt to understand the natural world according to its own principles and laws of formation, that is, as opposed to through the lens of received wisdom or religious dogma.¹⁷⁸ Indeed, for Cassirer, it was Leonardo who first provided the theoretical conception of ‘science’ that would later be taken up and developed by Galileo and Kepler.¹⁷⁹ Cassirer also demonstrated how developments in Renaissance art theory (the study of proportions, or *ragioni*) chimed with the new anthropocentric philosophy, according to which man found within himself the principles with which to understand the cosmos.¹⁸⁰ Thus, the intellectual unity and ‘direction’ of the Renaissance, its ‘periodicity’, was explicated by Cassirer through analysis of Renaissance culture in its varied forms.

¹⁷⁶ *The Individual and the Cosmos*, p86.

¹⁷⁷ *Ibid*, p85-6.

¹⁷⁸ *Ibid*, p152-3.

¹⁷⁹ Discussing the artist’s influence on Galileo, Cassirer writes, “Leonardo’s true intellectual greatness lies in this formulation of the *problem*, of the ‘theme’ of exact science.” *Ibid*, p156.

¹⁸⁰ Panofsky also devoted considerable attention in his early work to Renaissance art theory. See, for example, *Dürers Kunsttheorie, vornehmlich in ihrem Verhältnis zur Kunsttheorie der Italiener* (1915), *Das perspektivische Verfahren Leone Battista Albertis* (1915), *Die Entwicklung der Proportionslehre als Abbild der Stilentwicklung* (1922), *Die Perspektive als ‘symbolische Form’* (1927), & *The Codex Huygens and Leonardo da Vinci’s Art Theory* (1940).

Cassirer also used the Iconology of his Hamburg colleagues to illuminate how during the Renaissance a new sense of autonomy and self-confidence had begun to supplant the medieval belief in predestination. At one point, for example, he referenced an article by Warburg to illustrate how,

In the Renaissance a different image [of man] emerges ever more clearly. The old image of Fortune with a wheel seizing men and dragging them along, sometimes raising them, sometimes throwing them down into the abyss, now gives way to the depiction of Fortune with a sailboat. And this bark is not controlled by Fortune alone – man himself is steering it.¹⁸¹

Panofsky would endorse this view of the new conception of man formed during the Renaissance with his own iconological study, *Hercules am Scheidewege* in 1930.¹⁸² For Panofsky, the representation of The Choice of Hercules had only become possible with the new conception of man formed in the Renaissance. This pictorial allegory of an individual's free choice, between a life of Virtue and a life of Vice, Panofsky pointed out, would have been unthinkable according to a medieval Christian theology that conceived of *Virtus* only as a gift from God.

For the scholars at the KBW the Renaissance was an important founding stage in the development of the 'humanist tradition' of thought.¹⁸³ This was a tradition of thought, mapped out by Cassirer from the neo-Platonism of the Renaissance on to the Enlightenment, a tradition in which the freedom of the individual, to create, form and determine their own being, was the primary intellectual tenet.¹⁸⁴ Indeed, by quoting Pico to the effect that the unique character of man was "based upon the fact that (he) does not receive his being as something finished but that he forms it by virtue of his own free will,"¹⁸⁵ Cassirer connected the philosophy of the Renaissance to the Enlightenment ideals of *Bildung* and further, to his own *Philosophy of Symbolic Forms*.

Despite the fact that Cassirer was keen to distinguish the Renaissance as an important intellectual precursor of his own philosophy, he was careful not to simply project his own philosophical

¹⁸¹ Ibid., p77. The essay Cassirer here refers to was Warburg's, *Francesco Sassetti's Last Injunction to His Sons* (1907). Translated by David Britt in *Aby Warburg: The Renewal of Pagan Antiquity*, op. cit., pp222-262.

¹⁸² *Hercules am Scheidewege und andere antike Bildstoffe in der neueren Kunst*, 1930.

¹⁸³ Gertrud Bing, Warburg's assistant during the twenties and later a director of the Institute, has noted that Warburg too, "belonged to a generation for whom the Renaissance as a period was of outstanding significance on account of the apparently sudden brilliant development of a modern, independent outlook on life as opposed to the medieval subjection to church formulas and restrictions." 'The Warburg Institute', printed for private circulation, as part of *The Warburg Institute Annual Report, 1934-1935*, pp349-356; p351.

¹⁸⁴ Cassirer made explicit reference to the different stages in this humanist tradition of thought in *The Philosophy of the Enlightenment* (1932): "The Philosophy of the Enlightenment", he wrote, "forms but a part and a special phase of that whole intellectual development through which modern philosophic thought gained its characteristic self-confidence and self-consciousness. In former works, especially *Individual and Cosmos in the Philosophy of the Renaissance* and *The Platonic Renaissance in England*, I have tried to present and evaluate other phases of this great movement." Translated by F.C. Koelln and J. P. Pettegrove, 2009, pxii.

¹⁸⁵ *The Individual and the Cosmos*, p119.

Weltanschauung back onto the past. Indeed, in *The Individual and the Cosmos* Cassirer made every effort to understand the Renaissance on its own terms; drawing attention, for example, to the fact that a firm belief in magic and astrology went hand in hand with the new 'humanism' of many 'Renaissance' philosophers,¹⁸⁶ and pointing out unequivocally that the European Renaissance was still a fundamentally Christian religious period, albeit with a new anthropocentric orientation.¹⁸⁷ For Cassirer, the Renaissance was not some secular and scientific 'enlightenment'. Instead, he aimed to show how these later ideals became manifest during the Renaissance in *pregnant* form; i.e. as seeds that would grow to fruition in the thought of subsequent generations.

Cassirer's historical sedulousness was complemented by a certain methodological self-consciousness. He was very much 'transparent' in regards to the historical process itself, and the difficulty in circumscribing 'The Renaissance' as a historical 'period'.¹⁸⁸ Cassirer openly admitted that the 'periodicity' he presented was his own *theoretical* construct – a unity which he himself, as the interpreting historian, had distilled. However, this theory was not simply offered as the product of individual speculation. Cassirer's interpretation is bolstered throughout by comprehensive research; a research made manifest in copious footnotes and extensive quotations from primary sources. Cassirer presents within his text, the very material from which his hypothesis has been formed.

Such openness and transparency in regards the historical process was a particular characteristic of the scholarship that emanated from the *KBW*. Cassirer's admonition, that, "The history of philosophy must never forget that it can only make responsible generalisations by immersing itself in the most concrete particulars and in the most subtle nuances of historical detail,"¹⁸⁹ found an echo in Warburg's oft-repeated aphorism, "*Der liebe Gott steckt im Detail.*" Panofsky's Hamburg work was similarly assiduous and sedulous. Indeed, one reviewer of *Hercules am Scheidewege*, seemed almost to have despaired,

So exhaustive is the field of research covered, that even a brief synopsis of the contents would require more space than is available here...The documentation all through the book is so ample that it is a somewhat hopeless task to attempt to add anything.¹⁹⁰

¹⁸⁶ *Ibid*, p101, & p115.

¹⁸⁷ *Ibid*, p79.

¹⁸⁸ *Ibid*, p4-5.

¹⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, p5.

¹⁹⁰ Anon, 'Review of *Hercules am Scheidewege und ander Antike Bildstoffe in der Neuren Kunst*', *The Burlington Magazine for Connoisseurs*, 62:358, January 1933; pp48-9, p48.

This self-imposed scholarly discipline, the attempt to be objective, and to understand the past, as much as was possible, on its own terms, was an absolute point of principle for the Hamburg circle.¹⁹¹ Through the presentation of reasoned and disinterested research the scholars involved with the *KBW* endeavoured to provide an alternative to the partiality and chauvinism that typified the work of many of their contemporaries. Discussion of 'The Renaissance' problem in German scholarship of the twenties and thirties most commonly revolved around the question of national origins and national importance. German academics most often chose either to claim the Renaissance as an 'achievement of German spirit', or, perhaps more commonly, to denigrate the period altogether in comparison with the more 'Germanic' Middle Ages.¹⁹² The Renaissance was also a particular battleground for those *völkisch* historians who used 'race' as the principle factor in their understanding of cultural history. As Wallace K. Fergusson has noted,

The influence of racial theory...inspired a kind of medievalism, antagonistic to or tending to deny the originality of the Renaissance. But it might also lead to a substitution of the medieval-Germanic for the classical-Italian origins of the Renaissance in all countries, tracing its sources to the northern culture of the Middle Ages, to Gothic art, chivalrous literature, or simply to the creative energy inherent in the Teutonic blood.¹⁹³

In *The Individual and the Cosmos* Cassirer sought to transcend such parochial and restrictive interests, envisioning 'The Renaissance', as he had done in *Freiheit und Form*, as a European-wide phenomenon.¹⁹⁴ Cassirer began his study with an entire chapter devoted to the thought of Nicholas of Cusa; the German theologian being considered *the* central figure in the development of the new 'Renaissance' worldview.¹⁹⁵ In a second chapter Cassirer then pointed out how Cusanus had been influenced by Italian writers, and how he enacted a synthesis of these ideas which, in turn, resounded in the writing of Italians such as Pico and Leonardo.¹⁹⁶ Cassirer made no judgement in terms of the national origins and significance of these ideas. Ultimately Cusanus was understood in terms of his individual intellectual achievement, his contribution to the 'humanist tradition', the

¹⁹¹ Charlotte Schoell-Glass notes that "'Objectivity' (*Sachlichkeit*) was the K.B.W.'s shibboleth, and Warburg's motto for the (*KBW*) journal as well...'Objectivity' was cited again and again...as both corrective and invocation." *Aby Warburg and Anti-Semitism. Political Perspectives on Images and Culture*. Translated by Samuel Pakucs Willcocks, 2008, p109-110.

¹⁹² See, W. K. Fergusson, *The Renaissance in Historical Thought: Five Centuries of Interpretation*, 1948, p368-9.

¹⁹³ *Ibid.*, p325.

¹⁹⁴ Cassirer writes, unequivocally, "We cannot understand the history of a great intellectual movement, especially of a philosophical movement, by looking at it from a onesidedly national point of view. Every truly great genius, every 'national' genius in the deeper sense of the word, forces us to give up the narrowness of such a point of view at once." *The Individual and the Cosmos*, p47.

¹⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, p7.

¹⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, p48. For the links between the thought of Cusanus and Pico, see p87; for Cusanus and Leonardo, see, p50.

significance of which transcended the narrow boundaries of any national (or indeed 'racial') demarcation.

Cassirer's 'cosmopolitan' approach had a direct correlation in Panofsky's work. Nationalist and 'racialist' interpretations were particularly prominent in art history during the Weimar period, and nowhere was this more evident than in the field of Dürer scholarship.¹⁹⁷ The central issue for many German art historians was the question of Dürer's innate 'German-ness', and as such the artist's relationship with Italy was a particularly charged topic. There were, on the one hand, those who asserted that Italy had no importance whatsoever for Dürer, the quintessentially 'German' artist,¹⁹⁸ and on the other hand, there were those who claimed Dürer's contact with Italy proved hugely detrimental to his work.¹⁹⁹ In his Hamburg years Panofsky examined in great detail Dürer's relationship with his Italian and antique sources.²⁰⁰ In one such essay he responded to a contemporary German author who asserted that Dürer remained uninfluenced by the Italian Renaissance, that he had never even been to Italy, and that he knew classical models only because "they were accessible to him in Augsburg rather than in Bologna, Padua or Venice."²⁰¹ For Panofsky, Dürer's engagement with Italian art was a matter of historical fact, and a major stimulus in the development of the artist's life and work. In a detailed study Panofsky demonstrated how Dürer could only have known, in fact, how Dürer could only have *understood* Antique art through the intermediary agency of Italian Renaissance art.²⁰² However, Panofsky made no value judgement in regards to the significance of this relationship from any 'nationalist' point of view. Indeed, he made the point explicitly,

¹⁹⁷ See J. Białostocki, *Dürer and His Critics, 1500-1971*, 1986, especially, pp219-242.

¹⁹⁸ Białostocki quotes Freidrich Winkler, who wrote, "Dürer's art is part and parcel of German Gothic...Italy never had the same importance for him as for, say, Elsheimer, Hackert and Reinhart...Italy, the land of classic art, as seen and admired by the German-Roman school just did not exist for him." Ibid, p314.

¹⁹⁹ Even the great Heinrich Wölfflin was not immune from such patriotic sentiments in his writing, "(C)an Dürer be extolled by us as *the* great German painter? Rather must it not finally be admitted that a great talent has erred and lost its instincts by imitating foreign characteristics? Without doubt there is much in Dürer's art, and not only in his early art, that is original and delicious. But his work is interspersed with things which are alien to us. Samson has lost his locks in the lap of the Italian seductress." *The Art of Albrecht Dürer* (1905). Translated by Alistair and Heidi Grieve, 1971, p18.

²⁰⁰ E. Panofsky, 'Dürer's Stellung zur Antike', *Jahrbuch für Kunstgeschichte*, I, 1921/2, pp43-92. Translated by the author and reprinted as 'Albrecht Dürer and Classical Antiquity', in *Meaning in the Visual Arts*, 1955, pp277-329. All subsequent references are to this translation. See also, *Dürer's Darstellung des Apollo und ihr Verhältnis zu Barbari* (1920), *Dürer's Melencolia I* (with Fritz Saxl, 1923), *Albrecht Dürer's rhythmische Kunst* (1926) & *Zwei Dürerprobleme* (1931).

²⁰¹ The author cited by Panofsky was M. Hauttmann, 'Dürer und der Augsburger Antikenbesitz', *Jahrbuch der preussischen Kunstmuseen*, XLII, 1921, p34ff.

²⁰² "There is not one single case in which Dürer can be shown to have made a drawing directly from the Antique, either in Germany or in Venice or Bologna. He found the Antique only where – according to his own splendidly frank avowal – it had already been revived for generations: in the art of the Italian Quattrocento, where it confronted him in a form altered according to contemporary standards but, for this very reason, comprehensible to him." *Albrecht Dürer and Classical Antiquity*, p328-9.

It is not for the historian to decide whether Dürer, in thus reforming German art, 'poisoned its roots'. He who deplores the fact that Dürer imbued Northern art with his *antikische* Art, or that Rubens was influenced by Michelangelo and Titian, is just as naïve and dogmatic – only with an inverted sign, as it were – as those rationalistic critics of old who could not forgive Rembrandt for not going to Italy.²⁰³

Ultimately Panofsky wanted to show that Dürer was able to reflect self-consciously upon his own native artistic traditions, and that he was able to engage critically with his Italian sources. It was in this sense that the artist was able to transcend national boundaries, and as such Panofsky made the case (in a manner similar to Cassirer's analysis of Cusanus) that Dürer's artistic achievement was the achievement of an *individual*.²⁰⁴

The cosmopolitan and 'humanistic' approach to scholarship proffered by those associated with the *KBW* was conceived of, quite self-consciously, as an alternative to the chauvinism and racialism they believed had infected German academia.²⁰⁵ So concerned was Panofsky by these developments in 1923 that he suggested *KBW* publications should actively promote the study of Italian art in an effort to counteract nationalist tendencies.²⁰⁶ By the beginning of the 1930s, things had progressed to the point that Hamburg had become a haven for cosmopolitan, humanistic scholarship. In 1932, for example, Panofsky informed one American correspondent:

*"Even in our university we have some trouble with Hitlerite tendencies (not only among the students but also among the professors); still my own faculty is comparatively reasonable, and my personal hearers ('unberufen') very nice. I am lecturing on French art of the 17th and 18th centuries before about 120 people without having been attacked for treason against the country, and almost all the new students...who have appeared at Hamburg...are runaways from Munich, the main stronghold of nationalism in art history."*²⁰⁷

On an ideological level, Panofsky and his colleagues considered the wilful intrusion of partisanship and bias as an abhorrent transgression of the principles of disinterested *Wissenschaft*. Particularly objectionable were those who openly sermonised from the University lectern, appealing to the

²⁰³ Ibid., p325, n.25.

²⁰⁴ "If we may speak by way of simile: [Dürer] faced classical art in much the same way as a great poet who understands no Greek might face the works of Sophocles. The poet, too, will have to rely on a translation; but this will not prevent him from grasping Sophocles' meaning more fully than does the translator." Ibid., p329. Panofsky was undoubtedly influenced in his reading of Dürer's career by Warburg. See, for example, Aby Warburg, 'Dürer and Italian Antiquity' (1905), translated by David Britt, in *Aby Warburg: The Renewal of Pagan Antiquity*, op cit, pp553-558.

²⁰⁵ On the relationship between Aby Warburg and Ernst Cassirer in this context, see, C. Schoell-Glass, 'An Episode of Cultural Politics During the Weimar Republic: Aby Warburg and Thomas Mann Exchange a Letter Each', *Art History*, 21:1, March 1998, pp107-128; p110.

²⁰⁶ Panofsky expressed this wish to his friend and erstwhile teacher, Wilhelm Vöge. Vöge related Panofsky's sentiments in a letter to Fritz Saxl, October 31st 1923 (WIA GC, Ref. 29862).

²⁰⁷ Panofsky to Margaret Barr, May 7th 1932 (311).

deep-seated sentiments of a particular audience in order to promote their own *völkisch* reading of German culture. Wilhelm Pinder was one such scholar. And when Panofsky was asked by an American friend to provide a reference for this influential 'nationalist' art historian he described him as "unreliable and subjective in a rather disagreeable way: he writes either with foam on his mouth, or with tears in his eyes."²⁰⁸

It is in this context that we must understand the absolute premium placed upon methodological self-consciousness and scholarly 'objectivity' within the Hamburg group. There's was an appeal to reason, and they held dear to the *Aufklärung* principles of scholarship. It was the responsibility of each individual scholar to combat and surmount their own innate prejudices and partisanship. The effort had to be made to be 'objective' in one's approach, to temper one's own innate subjectivity, as much as was possible, in order to understand that which was 'other' on its own terms. It was this individual effort, this responsible, self-imposed discipline, that made historical scholarship 'humanistic'.

Such methodological idealism fed back into the ultimate purpose of 'humanistic' scholarship. This was historical, cultural study envisioned as self-understanding; a means of providing orientation for the human individual *qua* individual. As Cassirer would write,

History is not a knowledge of external facts or events; it is a form of self-knowledge....By making us cognisant of the polymorphism of human existence it frees us from the freaks and prejudices of a special single moment. It is this enrichment and enlargement, not the effacement, of the self, of our knowing and feeling ego, which is the aim of historical knowledge.²⁰⁹

Historical understanding broadened, enlarged and informed the individual's perspective. The objective, rationalised, and empathetic understanding of the diversity of human culture, and of historical difference, made the individual more tolerant, more 'fully formed', more universal. In the *Bildung* tradition, this was humanistic scholarship with moral purpose, or *Wissenschaft als Aufklärung*.

²⁰⁸ Panofsky to Alfred Barr, May 29th, 1937 (639). It is interesting in this context to compare Panofsky's *Die deutsche Plastik des elften bis dreizehnten Jahrhunderts* (1924) with the two works by Pinder in the same series - *Die Deutsche Plastik des Fünfzehnten Jahrhunderts*, (1924), and *Die Deutsche Plastik des Vierzehnten Jahrhunderts* (1925). Whereas Panofsky devoted significant attention to the French influence on German sculpture of the eleventh and twelfth centuries, Pinder made little mention of such 'outside' influence, maintaining instead a quite insistent focus on the purely 'Germanic' qualities of the art form.

²⁰⁹ *An Essay on Man*, p191. In *The Individual and the Cosmos* too, Cassirer wrote, "What we call 'wisdom'... is not really a knowledge of external objects but a knowledge of our own selves; not nature but *humanitas* is its proper object." p90.

The tragic irony is that these humanist ideals saw Panofsky and his colleagues in Hamburg ever more dangerously marginalised within German academia and within German society at large. Just as these scholars represented the best of the 'Weimar Spirit', so too were their fortunes bound with the fate of the liberal Republic. As exclusively *völkisch* and mythologized notions of 'Germanic' culture became increasingly prevalent, an equally irrational and insidious racial anti-Semitism came to the fore, positing the idea that Jews could never properly 'feel' what it was to 'be' German. The detached and rational approach proffered by those at the *KBW*, the very cosmopolitan and 'humanistic' tenor of their scholarship, was stigmatised as a lifeless, bloodless intellectualisation, and a marker of their 'Jewishness', their 'foreignness', and ultimately, their 'un-Germaness'.²¹⁰ With the anti-Semitic trope of the parasitic Jew, any attempt by a Jewish scholar to engage with 'German' subjects was dismissed as a facile, over-intellectualised, and ultimately futile attempt on their part to appropriate the superior spiritual values of Germanic *Kultur*.²¹¹

Eventually the Nazis would explicitly reject 'humanism' as an outmoded and unsuitable intellectual department. In 1936 one such educationalist proclaimed,

Each folk in each period must form its life according to its own law and fate and to this law of its own, scholarship, with all other spheres of life, is also subject...The idea of humanism, with the teaching of pure human reason and absolute spirit founded upon it, is a philosophical principle of the eighteenth century caused by the conditions of that time. It is in no sense binding upon us as we live under different conditions and under different fate.²¹²

By the time Ernst Kriek had made this pronouncement from the lectern at the University of Heidelberg Warburg was dead and Panofsky, Cassirer, Saxl and the contents of the Warburg Library had been in exile for three years.²¹³

Despite the Nazi's proclamation of modernity, Panofsky would continue to hold dear to those *Aufklärung* principles of humanistic scholarship once in exile in America. Indeed, these principles provided his primary point of reference and orientation in what was a markedly different intellectual and academic environment. It is this story, of Panofsky's subsequent acculturation in the United States, that is told in the following chapters.

²¹⁰ In the anti-Semitic literature there was often an explicit equation between 'cosmopolitanism' and 'Jewishness'. See, M.L. Miller and S. Ury, 'Cosmopolitanism: the End of Jewishness?', *European Review of History*, 17:3, 2010, pp337-359.

²¹¹ For this point, see J.L Koerner, 'The Shock of the View', *The New Republic*, April 1993, 208:17, pp32-38; esp. p36-7.

²¹² Ernst Kriek, *Das nationalsozialistische Deutschland und die Wissenschaft*, 1936. Translated by Max Weinreich in *Hitler's Professors: The Part of Scholarship in Germany's Crimes Against the Jewish People*, 1999, quotation on p21.

²¹³ Warburg died on October 29th, 1929.

Panofsky in America

1. Early experiences

Before 1933

Unlike many of those forced to leave Germany when the Nazis came to power, Panofsky had worked in America before 1933. This prior familiarity with the American environment was of great benefit when he was eventually compelled to leave the country of his birth.

Panofsky's engagement with American scholarship began in the early 1920s. In 1923, for example, he contacted Arthur Kingsley Porter requesting a copy of Porter's 'Romanesque Sculpture of the Pilgrimage Roads' for use in his Hamburg seminar.²¹⁴ The two men corresponded regularly thereafter and finally met in person when Porter visited the KBW in 1927.²¹⁵ Panofsky also met and impressed Paul Sachs the same year when the American, at that point developing the Fogg Art Museum, visited Hamburg to inspect Aby Warburg's Institute.²¹⁶ Again, Panofsky and Sachs maintained a congenial transatlantic correspondence thereafter. At a time when the majority of German art historians paid scant attention to American scholarship, Panofsky also had great respect for Charles Rufus Morey in Princeton. As he would later recall,

*"Back in 1923, when I was still teaching in Germany, Morey's article, 'The Sources of Medieval Style' struck me and my more enlightened European colleagues as the opening of a door where an impenetrable wall had been supposed to exist."*²¹⁷

Such openness to American scholarship and the cultivation of transatlantic scholarly relations was part and parcel of the outward-looking, cosmopolitan ethos of the KBW. Indeed, it was one of the credos of those within this circle that scholarship should be international and cooperative.²¹⁸ In this

²¹⁴ Panofsky to Arthur Kingsley Porter, December 31st, 1923 (104).

²¹⁵ Panofsky also contributed to Porter's Festschrift. See, 'Reintegration of a Book of Hours Executed in the Workshop of the *Maître des Grandes Heures de Rohan*', in *Medieval Studies in Memory of Arthur Kingsley Porter*, 2 vols., 1939, pp479-491.

²¹⁶ K. Brush, *Vastly More Than Bricks and Mortar: Reinventing the Fogg Art Museum in the 1920s*, 2003; esp. pp101-2.

²¹⁷ Panofsky made this testament in a written reference for Morey provided to the *American Philosophical Society*, December 5th, 1951 (1503).

²¹⁸ Gertrud Bing noted in June, 1936, that the "mutual understanding between different nationalities...the practical realisation of that humanism and enlightenment which is the purpose of true learning" was the "already established policy" of the Warburg Library. See Wuttke, *Panofsky's Korrespondenz*, Band I, p904.

vein Panofsky also had articles published in English-language periodicals in 1926 and 1928.²¹⁹ Thus, even before he crossed the Atlantic, Panofsky had established contacts in America; he was aware of American art scholarship; and he had developed a working proficiency in the English language.

Panofsky expressed an interest in visiting America as early as 1929,²²⁰ and New York University eventually invited him to be a Visiting Professor in 1930.²²¹ NYU's College of Fine Arts (later to become the Institute of Fine Arts) was then in the process of establishing a graduate department for art-historical research, the first of its kind in America, and its main figures, individuals such as Richard Offner and Walter W.S. Cook, looked to their German counterparts for example and direction.²²² It was arranged that Panofsky would teach the Fall term of 1931-2 at NYU, providing graduate courses as well as a more general course of public lectures, all in the English language.²²³

Panofsky made the most of this first transatlantic sojourn, sampling scholarly life on the East Coast and cementing and extending his American contacts. He reacquainted himself with Paul Sachs in Harvard, for example, providing a lecture for his American friend at the Fogg. Panofsky also visited Charles Rufus Morey in Princeton, and the two men struck up an instant friendship and a cooperative professional relationship that would last until Morey's death in 1955.²²⁴ Panofsky had begun to establish a network of American contacts which would stand him in good stead when he lost his Hamburg post.

On this first visit Panofsky was also introduced, by Eddie Warburg (nephew of Aby), to a wealthy, philanthropic New York elite with a predilection for cultural pursuits and sponsoring of the arts. Providing lectures at weekly 'salons' held in the home of a Mrs Josephine Porter Boardman Crane, Panofsky found himself rubbing shoulders with real life Rockefellers, and members of the Straus family, of Macy's Department Store fame. He would later recount how this 'high society' audience would "arrive in twelve-cylinder Cadillacs, seasoned Rolls-Royces, Pierce Arrows and

²¹⁹ The first of these was written in German, in conjunction with Fritz Saxl. It was translated by Campbell Dodgson as, 'A Late Antique Religious Symbol in Works by Holbein and Titian', and published in *The Burlington Magazine for Connoisseurs*, 49:283, October 1926, pp177-181. The second article was written in English by Panofsky himself: 'Two Lost Drawings By (and After) Sebastiano del Piombo', *Old Master Drawings, A Quarterly Magazine for Students and Collectors*, 2, June 1927-March 1928, pp31-4.

²²⁰ Panofsky to Fritz Saxl, September 20th, 1929 (229).

²²¹ Richard Offner to Panofsky, December 13th, 1930 (263). Panofsky's invite was secured upon the recommendation of his former teacher Adolph Goldschmidt, who had himself previously made a successful teaching visit to the United States.

²²² For a history of the IFA, see, H. Bober, *The Gothic Tower and the Stork Club*, op. cit.

²²³ Panofsky's lectures were advertised as 'The Evolution of Sculpture in Italy, France and Germany in the Middle Ages', 'Dürer as Artist and Thinker', and 'Classical Mythology in the Art of the Middle Ages and of the Early Renaissance in the Northern Countries.' *The New York Times*, September 20th, 1931.

²²⁴ Morey was obviously familiar with Panofsky's work, as he asked for a copy of *Zum Problem der Beschreibung* (1927). For Panofsky's lasting respect for Morey see 'Charles Rufus Morey', *American Philosophical Society Yearbook*, 1955/56, pp482-491.

Locomobiles.”²²⁵ Many of those present were influential trustees within American universities and/or donors to major American museums and galleries,²²⁶ and Panofsky was also introduced on these occasions to American ‘museum men’ such as Alfred Barr and William J. Ivens.²²⁷ In terms of what Panofsky would have been used to in Germany, this was something of a dilettantish crowd, and the German scholar was thus given an early and valuable insight into the extent to which the academic and the social worlds were very much intertwined in America in the early thirties. Again, these significant connections would prove hugely beneficial after 1933.

Panofsky was certainly considered a ‘success’ on this first visit to America. Mrs Crane, for example, invited him back to lecture at her home should he ever return Stateside.²²⁸ Panofsky’s employers at NYU were also impressed by his facility with the English language and particularly with his ability to engage his American students, not to mention the fee-paying public that attended the more general lectures. Communication was a real concern for those responsible for selecting visiting European scholars. German professors in particular had the reputation of being overly recondite, and for remaining somewhat haughty and aloof. Facility with the German language could not be taken for granted among the American student contingent, but neither was there the wide-ranging humanistic education, nor the independence and maturity of approach that was *de rigueur* within the German university. The concern was that German professors would expect too much from their American charges and thus fail to engage with them productively. By all accounts Panofsky’s performance belied these concerns. Indeed, Walter Cook was pleasantly surprised by Panofsky’s relaxed and familiar manner.²²⁹ Panofsky was known for his informal relations with his Hamburg students,²³⁰ and it seems this continued in America.²³¹ Alfred Barr provides revealing testimony to the great impression made by this foreign scholar:

²²⁵ Panofsky, *Three Decades*, op. cit., p89.

²²⁶ Mrs Crane, Mrs John D. Rockefeller and Eddie Warburg were all co-founders of New York’s Museum of Modern Art. Percy S. Straus was the influential Chair of NYU’s newly constituted Council Committee on Fine Arts.

²²⁷ Barr was the first Director of the Museum of Modern Art, and Ivens was Curator of the Department of Prints at the Metropolitan Museum.

²²⁸ Eddie Warburg also informed Panofsky that he had made a tremendous impression on these occasions. Panofsky to Margaret Barr, October 3rd, 1932 (333).

²²⁹ Panofsky would tell one friend that “Cook behaves very kindly towards me because the students seem to like my lectures.” Panofsky to Margaret Barr, March 9th, 1933 (357).

²³⁰ Emily Jane Levine, *Culture, Commerce, and the City*, op. cit., p230. See also, W. Heckscher, *A Curriculum Vitae*, op. cit., p12.

²³¹ Millard Meiss would recall how when the Met (where the early College of Fine Arts seminars were held) closed for the day, Panofsky would continue to teach, “most effectively, in an illegal American speak-easy.” M. Meiss, contribution to *A Commemorative Gathering for Erwin Panofsky at the Institute of Fine Arts, New York University. In Association with the Institute for Advanced Study*, March 21st, 1968, p8.

“It is scarcely pertinent for me to enlarge upon Dr Panowsky’s (sic) achievements. What I wish most to emphasize to you...is his remarkable success as a lecturer and a teacher...For no matter how learned a continental scholar may be he will be judged by students...in America by his ability to present his knowledge, to direct study and to excite enthusiasm...[H]is lectures at New York University and the Metropolitan Museum have impressed that most critical of listeners, the advanced student, as have no other lectures in my memory either by an American or foreign scholar. Through his excellent command of English and his sensitiveness to the development of his students he has been able to repeat in large measure his really remarkable triumph in Hamburg...So great was his success in New York that he was in constant demand for single lectures among other American universities. Even those wealthy amateurs who do not usually concern themselves with a scholarly approach to art, asked him to give a series of lectures upon the persistence of classical themes in medieval art.”²³²

This ability to engage and communicate with his American audience (and the reputation he enjoyed for doing so), was absolutely fundamental to the popularity and success Panofsky went on to enjoy in the United States.

Following this first successful visit Panofsky was immediately considered for a return to the College of Fine Arts the following year. Panofsky was only too happy with such a prospect, considering the economic and political conditions he returned to in Germany, and his main concern in the interim was whether NYU would have enough money to fund a second visit.²³³ Panofsky did secure two more twelve-week lecture courses for the spring term of 1933, to be given at the Metropolitan Museum of Art, once more under the auspices of the College of Fine Arts.²³⁴ And once back in America the German scholar again sought work as a kind of itinerant art historian, providing lectures at different institutions across the East Coast.²³⁵ On his return Panofsky was very much aware that America was also in the throes of an economic depression, and he lamented the fact that ‘paid for’ lectures were much harder to come by.²³⁶ Nonetheless, with Hitler having been appointed Chancellor shortly after his arrival in New York, Panofsky also admitted to Margaret Barr that he was

²³² Alfred Barr to Samuel Courtauld, May 24th, 1933 (370). Paul Sachs also commented upon Panofsky’s ‘success’ as a teacher and communicator. See Sachs to Paul Clemen, May 2nd, 1934 (462).

²³³ For the increasingly fraught circumstances in which Panofsky was living and working in Hamburg, see, Panofsky to Margaret Barr, March 31st, 1932 (308), & June 27th, 1932 (320).

²³⁴ Panofsky’s lectures on ‘The Principles of Baroque Art’ were opened to the general public; whereas those on ‘The Origins of Flemish Painting’ were for students of a more ‘advanced’ nature.

²³⁵ On this visit Panofsky lectured on ‘Michelangelo and Correggio’ in Pennsylvania, and on Dürer’s ‘Melancholia’ at Johns Hopkins University in Baltimore.

²³⁶ Panofsky to Margaret Barr, March 9th, 1933 (357).

glad to be back in America, “rather than watching the whole mess going on in Germany with my own eyes.”²³⁷

As is now well known, Panofsky was actually working in New York when he received word of his dismissal from Hamburg University. He would later recall “fondly”, and obviously with some irony, how the telegram bearing the news came replete with “‘Cordial Easter Greetings’ from the Western Union Telegram Company.”²³⁸ This rather blithe and laconic retelling of events tends to obscure the real distress and anxiety Panofsky suffered. Forced to seek employment outside of Germany the German scholar was all too aware of his limited options. Due to a lack of funds the College of Fine Arts had not actually planned on inviting him back once his spring lectureship was over. The best Walter Cook could do at such short notice was to offer Panofsky a single lecture course the next year. Cook did work tirelessly on Panofsky’s behalf in the intervening period; in particular, canvassing support from those wealthy individuals who Panofsky had so impressed on his previous visit. However, Panofsky recognised the difficult job his American contact was having and wrote to Margaret Barr,

*“I think it is quite pardonable that the New York Millionaires are dead sick of supporting fat Jewish professors and rather subsidize ballet girls. If I was a millionaire, I would, in all probability, behave in the same way.”*²³⁹

With no immediate prospects of employment in America Panofsky returned to his family in Hamburg. This Hanseatic city was still a relatively safe place for a German Jew,²⁴⁰ and with no teaching duties Panofsky concentrated on his research at the *KBW*.²⁴¹ During this time he also travelled to Belgium and France in an attempt to establish contacts and to survey the possibilities there for future employment.²⁴² This was an extremely uncertain and unsettling period for Panofsky and his family. He heard mention of potential job prospects in locations such as Stockholm, Edinburgh, Oxford, the Courtauld Institute in London and the Universities of Chicago and Notre-Dame in America, but nothing concrete materialised. Obviously very much concerned about his

²³⁷ Ibid. Margaret Barr was married to Alfred H. Barr Jr., first director of the Museum of Modern Art in New York, and Panofsky would have been introduced to the couple at the home of Mrs Josephine Porter Boardman Crane, during his first visit to New York. Margaret Barr became one of Panofsky’s closest friends and confidantes during his early years in the United States, introducing to him to various aspects of American life and culture and providing help and advice with Panofsky’s earliest American publications.

²³⁸ Panofsky, *Three Decades*, op. cit. p82.

²³⁹ Panofsky to Margaret Barr, November 30th, 1933 (418). ‘Eddie’ Warburg helped establish the American Ballet (precursor to the New York Ballet) in 1933.

²⁴⁰ Panofsky informed Margaret Barr, “Hamburg is really a very decent place and is generally regarded as a kind of oasis as far as the human situation is concerned.” May 17th, 1933 (368).

²⁴¹ Panofsky even told Margaret Barr that he had never had so much time to devote to his research. May 27th, 1933 (371).

²⁴² In August 1933, for example, he visited Henri Foçillon in Maranville.

livelihood and the long-term safety and security of his family, Panofsky admitted to Margaret Barr, “There is hardly a lecturing-opportunity on earth which would not be acceptable under the present circumstances.”²⁴³ Panofsky eventually returned to New York in the January of 1934, almost one full year since his last visit, to fulfil his temporary commitment to Walter Cook and NYU. Unsure what the future would hold after this three month placement though, Panofsky’s wife Dora, and their two young sons remained in Hamburg. Even though he was widely considered one of the most talented young German art historians, and despite the fact he had already proven himself with his American colleagues, Panofsky was unable to find any permanent employment in the wake of his dismissal from Hamburg. This fact should stand as a challenge to any who would take at face value Walter Cook’s oft-quoted aphorism, “Hitler is my best friend, he shakes the tree and I collect the apples.”

Initial reservations

Contrary to what is usually presumed, and indeed, in contrast to his own retelling of events, Panofsky was not initially predisposed to settling in America permanently. No matter how keen Panofsky was to ingratiate himself with his American associates on his first visits, it is important to point out that these trips to America were motivated, primarily, by financial considerations. The dire economic conditions in Weimar Germany made the prospect of a lucrative Visiting Professorship in America hugely appealing, and Panofsky admitted to his friend Walter Friedländer in 1932 that without the money he received from NYU he would not have been able to maintain his rented family apartment in Hamburg.²⁴⁴ When Panofsky was forced to look for employment outside of Germany, he wrote a confessional letter to Margaret Barr from Hamburg, admitting that he “felt a kind of horror at the thought of living in America for ever, because life is pretty hard over there and somewhat sterile as far as ‘art and culture’ is concerned.”²⁴⁵ Though Barr lived in America she had been born and schooled in Europe, and Panofsky regarded her as a kind of ‘confidante’, trusting her with his more candid views on life in America.²⁴⁶ It is from letters such as these that we are given real insight into Panofsky’s estimation of the American environment.

Despite the affable, personable and agreeable persona Panofsky worked hard to cultivate for his new American friends, his letters reveal a sharp and discerning critic of the American academic and

²⁴³ Panofsky to Margaret Barr, May 27th, 1933 (371).

²⁴⁴ Panofsky to Walter Friedländer, March 22nd, 1932 (306).

²⁴⁵ Panofsky to Margaret Barr, September 8th, 1933 (396).

²⁴⁶ As Panofsky informed Barr, “...you, dearest lady Margaret, are no ‘American’ in the normal sense, but rather an exceptional and ‘optimal’ case thanks to your Irish-Italian extraction (and) your European-American education and interests.” Ibid.

social environment, a man very much attuned to the alterity of intellectual and scholarly life in the United States.²⁴⁷ Though he rated the graduate students he'd worked with at Princeton, Panofsky confessed to Fritz Saxl that he was less than impressed with American students in general, describing those at NYU as "particularly stupid and ignorant."²⁴⁸ Panofsky was accustomed to more advanced interactions with his students, where the combination of his research and teaching was more *mutually* productive. Indeed, the unity of teaching and research was, for Panofsky, one of the fundamental principles of university *Wissenschaft*. In America he felt some frustration having to pitch his courses at a much more 'general' level. This was especially the case when he returned to NYU in 1934, as Cook, constrained by economic circumstance, had made all of Panofsky's lectures open to a paying public.



1. Panofsky teaching at the Institute of Fine Arts, NYU, in the 1930s.

Panofsky had actually begun to resent the role he was being asked to play at NYU. He felt he was being used as a workhorse, a 'hired hand' whose job it was to get paying customers through the

²⁴⁷ Karen Michels notes that Panofsky "assumed the attitude of a cultural anthropologist wielding a butterfly net to search for the behaviour patterns of the 'other', the 'foreigner', or even the 'exotic'." *Pineapple and Mayonnaise – Why Not?* op. cit., p57.

²⁴⁸ Panofsky told Saxl the graduate students at NYU were "besonders dämlich und unwissend." October 21st, 1931 (277).

door. As well as preparing and pitching his lectures at a suitably 'introductory' level, Panofsky was expected to organise syllabi and bibliographies, correct test papers and generally cater to the wants and needs of his students – all organisational responsibilities he would decry as “an elaborate system of crutches and whips.”²⁴⁹ Panofsky was particularly conscious that he had no time for his own research, let alone the scope to broach the problems of research with his American charges. Overburdened with teaching and administrative duties Panofsky complained to Margaret Barr,

*“You know as well as I do that I cannot possibly do any real research work in America, with all those courses (NYU having put in a ‘seminar course’, so that I shall have to lecture 8 hours a week), examinations and ‘consultations with the students’.”*²⁵⁰

Panofsky found the general environment at NYU, where monetary concerns seemed to take precedence over the scholarly, somewhat distasteful. He was obviously grateful for the efforts of Walter Cook in raising money to employ him at short notice, and he certainly rated Cook as an organiser and administrator. However, it would seem Panofsky was less sure of Cook's status as a 'scholar', and in a less-than-charitable moment he even described the Chairman of the College of Fine Arts as appearing “like a bondsalesman.”²⁵¹ As Panofsky related to Margaret Barr,

*“[Cook] loves managing things...(H)e belongs to that particular kind of housewives who, in normal days, are rather a nuisance by their unbridled inclination to tidy up things, to bustle about with vacuum-cleaners and to interfere with the cook, but are very useful and efficient in cases of illness or emergency.”*²⁵²

Panofsky may have enjoyed mixing with New York's high society circles, but he was exceedingly uncomfortable with the fact that they now, effectively paid his wages. The German scholar was used to his status and standing being dependent solely upon his learning, his 'cultivation', and he did not enjoy being in the position of “a *réfractaire* supported out of sheer charity.”²⁵³ Panofsky's general discontentment with his lot at NYU is made clear in a letter he sent to his erstwhile Hamburg colleague, Gertrud Bing, describing how he was,

“...greatly annoyed by the fact that the course announced and arranged as a ‘seminar’ in the Morgan Library was used for publicity purposes (partly to give some prestige to NYU, partly to prevent Mr Morgan from having to pay taxes for his library) without my knowledge...I am lecturing to an audience of 60/70 persons,

²⁴⁹ Panofsky to Edward Murrow, January 26th, 1935 (519).

²⁵⁰ Panofsky to Margaret Barr, July 10th, 1934 (467).

²⁵¹ Panofsky to Margaret Barr, February 8th, 1933 (352).

²⁵² Panofsky to Margaret Barr, April 16th, 1933 (362).

²⁵³ Ibid.

including 30 'chinchilla ladies' who are (rightly) tormented as much as when attending the Wagner Operas in the Metropolitan Opera."²⁵⁴



2. Panofsky's audience at the Institute for Fine Arts, NYU, in the early 1930s (note Walter W.S. Cook at the back, beside the door).

Contrary to what Panofsky would later claim, his first choice after 1933 would not have been to settle in America.²⁵⁵ Indeed, Panofsky actually made every effort to secure a place with the Warburg Library in its new home in London.²⁵⁶ The Warburg Library was obviously a resource centre particularly suited to Panofsky's own conception of humanistic scholarship. For over a decade it had provided both the raw material and an overarching philosophy for Panofsky's art-historical investigations. His strong desire to move to London indicates just how important he considered the continuation of this research. When his teaching commitments at NYU finished in the spring of 1934 Panofsky visited the Library in London on two separate occasions; and in lengthy letters with Saxl Panofsky pushed for the possibility of them resuming their scholarly collaboration in Britain. Ultimately however, those involved with the Library in London decided that Panofsky, with his reputation and prior experience outside Germany, would be able to secure work elsewhere. In that period of crisis they opted to channel their resources into helping other, more disadvantaged, exiled scholars. Panofsky was extremely frustrated and also genuinely wounded by this turn of events. He

²⁵⁴ Panofsky to Gertrud Bing, March 3rd, 1935 (525).

²⁵⁵ In 1941 one American journalist reported, "Mr Panofsky said today he had loved this country even before anyone thought of Hitler and had always prepared to come here someday for good." *The Asheville Times*, Friday, August 22nd, 1941.

²⁵⁶ For details of the transplantation of the Warburg Library to London see, G. Whitaker, 'A Moment in Time: From the Digital Record of a Migrating Library', in *Migrations in Society, Culture and the Library: WESS European Conference, 22-26 March 2004*, T.D. Kilton & C. Birkhead (eds.), p216-232.

told Margaret Barr how he was, “bitterly disappointed with the Library-people because of their leaving me in the mess in spite of twelve years of collaboration.”²⁵⁷ And he would go on to write,

*“They abounded, of course, in manifestations of loyalty and friendship and grief, and wept a good deal about the impossibility of getting me to London, too...(but) on the whole, I can’t help feeling that the whole thing was what I should like to call a ‘well-intentioned porcheria’.”*²⁵⁸

It would be a number of years before Panofsky was willing to resume contact with his former Hamburg colleagues.²⁵⁹ The disappointment and resentment he felt over this affair indicates just how important this German scholar considered primary research and individual inquiry.²⁶⁰

Commitment

Only after Panofsky’s London hopes were finally quashed did he come around to the idea of settling permanently in America. The situation for Jews in Germany was deteriorating rapidly and Panofsky had his wife and young family to consider. Though Panofsky still had no concrete offers of permanent work, NYU and Princeton University had come to an arrangement that would allow them to offer him paid work for the next two years. Walter Cook had managed to scrape up enough money from among his philanthropic contacts to offer Panofsky a two-year Visiting Professorship at NYU starting in the fall of 1934, with a salary of \$6000.²⁶¹ Charles Rufus Morey, meanwhile, had arranged a house for the Panofskys in Princeton and schooling for their boys at the University, in return for Panofsky teaching in his Department of Art and Archaeology.²⁶² With no other prospects, Panofsky agreed to this deal and moved his family to their temporary home in Princeton, New Jersey.

²⁵⁷ Panofsky to Margaret Barr, November 30th, 1933 (418).

²⁵⁸ Panofsky to Margaret Barr, December 14th, 1933 (422).

²⁵⁹ Ernst Gombrich has also testified to Panofsky’s lasting sense of disappointment. See *Looking for Answers*, op. cit., p138.

²⁶⁰ Panofsky was involved with the American Warburg family’s attempts to have the Warburg Library relocated from London to New York. Once again, this demonstrates Panofsky’s determination to continue his research. For details of this episode, see G. Whitaker, *A Moment in Time*, op. cit., esp p220.

²⁶¹ See the announcement in *Art News*, 32:16, 1934, p4. Among those named as contributors were Mrs Crane, Felix Warburg and Lionel F. Straus.

²⁶² The schooling of his sons, Hans and Wolfgang was a matter of particular concern for Panofsky. In May he told Margret Barr he didn’t think America would be a good option because, “the schools are too bad, and the private schools too expensive.” May 17th, 1933 (368).

Panofsky remained less than enamoured of the prospect of continued employment at NYU,²⁶³ but he was pleased to be associated with the Ivy League University of Princeton. The opportunity to work closely with Morey was a major factor in his decision to move to America. After visiting Morey to discuss the prospective move, Panofsky wrote,

*“[T]he very ‘atmosphere’ of the place and the prospect of working even for a limited time, with a man like Morey has so much appealed to us that we decided to come to Princeton in the Fall and to leave the rest to Fate or destiny.”*²⁶⁴

A heartfelt letter to Morey, written towards the end of Panofsky’s last visit to London, provides an illuminating insight into the reasoning behind what became a firm commitment to life in the United States. As such it is worth quoting Panofsky here at some length:

*“I can hardly express my gratitude for the indefatigable kindness and patience with which you take care of our future life in Princeton, including books, office and even wall-papers. It means a good deal to me to feel received with such good will, and I don’t regret the failure of our London plans. True, the facilities of the Warburg Library are quite splendid...and I am sure that my life in London would have been more leisurely and more fertile with respect to research, yet I feel that English civilisation, and especially the English attitude towards art, has something impermeable about it, so that a foreign scholar would always remain an emigrant instead of becoming an immigrant. The English attitude towards a work of art is a ‘gentlemanly’ one, so to speak. They either conceive it as an object of enjoyment and collecting (including connoisseurship), or as a mere historical monument which must be traced through 27 monasteries down to St. Patrick, but they almost object to scientific analysis and interpretation, as they would object to a man who would analyse the mental and physical qualities of his wife in public, instead of making love to her in private or perhaps writing her family-history. Thus I do feel that the development or rather resurrection of continental methods will take place in America rather than here, and I should be more than happy if I could participate, however modestly, in this process.”*²⁶⁵

Perhaps as a direct consequence of his recent experiences with the Warburg library it seems to have been genuinely important to Panofsky that he was made to feel welcome and ‘wanted’ by Morey. Despite his reservations, and even in the face of an uncertain future, Panofsky was, at this relatively early stage, committing himself to life in America. He had decided by this point that he would never return to Germany and he was eager to establish himself and his family somewhere permanently. He was determined to enact, as much as was possible, a continuation or re-presentation of his own

²⁶³ Panofsky told Margret Barr, “I feel, personally, that I have done the right thing in coming to America – even if I should remain tied up with N.Y.U. all my life.” July 10th, 1934 (467).

²⁶⁴ Panofsky to Abraham Flexner, March 29th, 1934 (444).

²⁶⁵ Panofsky to C.R. Morey, July 20th, 1934 (471).

particular conception of *Kunstwissenschaft*, and he believed that America offered the best opportunity for this. A letter to Margaret Barr clarifies further Panofsky's thinking on this major decision:

*"I am almost convinced that, in a way, a 'déraciné' could find a new home (which means a feeling of being wanted) in America more easily than in Europe. The other European countries are 'adult countries', that is to say they have developed a culture and a scientific method and also (what is more important) a general human attitude which is mature, finished and somehow 'closed'. They would receive a foreigner with hospitality and even kindness (cf. Foçillon), but would not meet him half-way, so to speak: he would have to adapt himself completely to the indigenous culture 'encombrée par une tradition' (and I am certainly too old, and probably too 'German' for that, in spite of my much maligned race), unless he would remain an isolated outsider for all his life. America however is still in a state of mouldable plasticity, not only willing to give, but also to take, and I could imagine that a person like me could be more useful to the American students than to the English or the French, and could establish a kind of dynamic relation to other human beings more easily."*²⁶⁶

Panofsky's decision to settle in America was not made easily, but he did make it with real resolution and with his eyes open. He had sampled American scholarly life and was conscious of how dissimilar it was to that in Germany. However, he had also decided that America provided the best opportunity for transplanting something of his own approach to scholarship. Unlike a large number of the exiled scholars, Panofsky made a full commitment to *becoming* an American.²⁶⁷ He understood early that there would have to be 'give' as well as 'take' on both sides, and that he himself would have to adapt in order to establish himself. It was this cognisance of, and reflection upon the acculturation process that would condition the development of Panofsky's American career, and, ultimately, his success.

²⁶⁶ Panofsky to Margaret Barr, September 8th, 1933 (396).

²⁶⁷ Jean-Michel Palmier notes, "On the whole, the émigrés remained complete strangers to American culture, made little effort to understand it, and found it hard to abandon a real contempt towards it." *Weimar in Exile*, op. cit., p510.

2. Taking stock

The Institute for Advanced Study

It was a full two years before Panofsky secured permanent employment in the United States, at the Institute for Advanced Study (IAS) in Princeton New Jersey. The émigré scholar's position there proved hugely significant in terms of the status and prestige he would go on to enjoy in America, and as such it is important to understand the unique character of this particular institution and the appeal it had for Panofsky.

The IAS was a privately funded, independent research institute – the only one of its kind in the United States at this time. It was the brainchild of the educationalist Abraham Flexner. Flexner had come to prominence in 1910 with his scathing and influential critique of American medical education.²⁶⁸ In the twenties he turned his sights on the American university in general, decrying the emphasis placed upon undergraduate teaching and vocational training.²⁶⁹ Flexner was an avowed admirer of the *Bildung* model of education and he was of the opinion that American universities should be reformed according to the German model – i.e. he believed American universities should be devoted primarily to free, impartial and unrestricted research.²⁷⁰ Flexner had developed these ideas as a series of lectures, given in Oxford in 1928. He was in the process of preparing these lectures for publication when he was approached by representatives of Mr Louis Bamberger and Mrs Felix Fuld, a brother and sister from a wealthy Jewish family looking to establish a medical school for Jewish students in Newark, New Jersey. Flexner suggested instead that these wealthy benefactors instead fund the type of institution the need for which he had outlined in his book. Flexner was obviously very persuasive as Bamberger and Fuld agreed, on the condition that Flexner himself became the proposed institution's first Director.

Flexner's idealistic Institute was devoted to research and advanced teaching in the Sciences and Humanities. Flexner envisaged a holistic, multidisciplinary approach to research and learning, akin to the high ideals of German *Wissenschaft*. Permanent members of the IAS were to be completely unburdened by any 'introductory' teaching. If they were to 'teach', it would only ever be with the more advanced graduate students that they themselves had selected for temporary memberships.

²⁶⁸ A. Flexner, *Medical Education in the United States and Canada*, 1910.

²⁶⁹ A. Flexner, *Universities: American, English, German*, 1930, p218.

²⁷⁰ Flexner would claim, "There is not a single university in America today which can be said to pursue a university policy in the sense which, with a few reservations, every university in Germany pursues such a policy." *Address given at a "Symposium on Higher Education"*, see *Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society*, 69:1, 1930, pp257-269; p264.

Members were to be left to their own research, unburdened by any administrative duties. There was to be no 'applicability' demanded, no utilitarian value whatsoever placed upon the work of those who resided there. Indeed, members of the IAS Faculty were to be extremely well paid with their only duty a devotion to the advancement of knowledge in their particular field.²⁷¹ As Flexner would later recall,

It seemed to me that the time was ripe for the creation in America of an institute in the field of general scholarship and science...[N]ot a graduate school, training young men in the known and to some extent in the methods of research, but an institute where everyone – faculty and members – took for granted what was known and published, and in their individual ways endeavoured to advance the frontiers of knowledge.²⁷²

The IAS was founded upon these high ideals in Princeton, New Jersey in 1930. Though it was (and remains) entirely independent, Flexner believed that the Institute should be established in close proximity to Princeton University so that it could benefit, most especially in its early years, from use of a ready-made library and other university facilities. It was a matter of principle for Flexner that the Institute and the University maintain cooperative relations, and as such, advanced students from both Princeton and the IAS were allowed to freely attend classes and to seek advice from staff at either institution.²⁷³ The IAS also maintained a strict 'hands-off' policy with respect to Princeton's academic staff.

The Institute officially opened with the School of Mathematics in 1932. A School of Economics and Politics followed the next year. When Flexner began to give consideration to a School of Humanistic Studies in 1934 he sought the opinion and advice of his old friend Charles Rufus Morey.²⁷⁴ Morey, knowing that Panofsky was in need of permanent employment, involved his émigré friend in the discussions immediately, recommending him to Flexner as an ideal candidate for a Faculty position within the proposed Humanistic School.²⁷⁵

Panofsky had been aware of the IAS from an early point. The Institute had opened in 1932, during Panofsky's first stay in America, and attracted a blaze of publicity, partly on account of Flexner's reputation, but also because Albert Einstein was the first Faculty member of the School of

²⁷¹ See 'IAS Book', freely available at <http://www.ias.edu/about/publications/ias-book>, p11 (last accessed, December 14th, 2012).

²⁷² Ibid.

²⁷³ See, A. Flexner, 'History and Organisation,' *Bulletin of the Institute for Advanced Study*, no.3, February 1934, p2.

²⁷⁴ See, 'IAS Book', op. cit., p18-19.

²⁷⁵ Panofsky freely admitted that he owed his place at the IAS to Morey. Panofsky to Robert Oppenheimer, January 5th, 1951 (1422).

Mathematics.²⁷⁶ Panofsky was also aware of, and impressed by, Flexner's comparison of the American and German universities.²⁷⁷ As such, Panofsky was keen to be involved in the Institute's expansion into the humanities. In 1934, for example, Panofsky wrote to Flexner:

*"We were, of course...informed of your Institute before we went to Princeton, but had never dreamt that a Utopia could be realised in this sublunary world to such an extent and actually take shape. It is both needless and impossible to say what it would mean to me if you could see a way to admit me to your scholar's paradise, so that I could go back to real research and real teaching."*²⁷⁸

As well as the prospect of remaining situated in Princeton, and in continued collaboration with Morey, the role at the IAS also offered Panofsky the opportunity to concentrate on his own research and to combine this with a productive engagement with advanced graduate students. The IAS offered what Panofsky would later refer to as a "really very un-'American' set-up,"²⁷⁹ and this made it hugely appealing. When Panofsky heard that Walter Cook had eventually secured enough funds to offer him a permanent position at NYU, he immediately wrote to Flexner,

"...a position at the Institute would be infinitely more desirable, not only from my personal point of view but also in so far as it would enable me to resume real research-work which is practically not feasible under present circumstances."

To emphasise his point, he continued, somewhat cattily,

"...and I am glad that the NYU authorities, even from their educational point of view, are inclined to admit, that one seminar-course based upon the living research-work of the instructor and in which the Graduate students would participate in a constructive way may be preferable to two courses of a more informative character."

To Margaret Barr Panofsky even confided, "N.Y.U. is neither exceedingly pleasant nor financially sound."²⁸⁰

Panofsky went to considerable length to position himself firmly in Flexner's thoughts. Knowing that Morey had Flexner's ear, he sent his Princeton friend a shrewdly composed letter, making the case that their common subject, the History of Art, was in fact the most suitable subject with which to

²⁷⁶ For the intensive news coverage of the IAS opening, see, T.N. Bonner, *Iconoclast: Abraham Flexner and a Life in Learning*, 2002, p230.

²⁷⁷ Wolfgang Panofsky noted his father's approval of Flexner's trenchant critique of American education. See, interview with Dr Wolfgang Kurt Panofsky, by Charles Weiner at the Stanford Linear Accelerator Center, California; May 15th 1973: http://www.aip.org/history/ohilist/4994_1.html Accessed: December 19th 2012.

²⁷⁸ Panofsky to Flexner, March 29th, 1934 (444).

²⁷⁹ Panofsky to Saxl, May 21st, 1943 (898).

²⁸⁰ Panofsky to Margaret Barr, December 27th, 1934 (510).

establish a multidisciplinary Humanistic School. Morey, in complete agreement, duly informed Flexner of Panofsky's letter:

*"In conclusion, and in lieu of expressing very positive (but possibly prejudiced) convictions of my own in favour of our subject as an initial field for the expansion of the Institute's activities into the humanities, I take the liberty of quoting Panofsky from a recent letter: 'Art and archaeology would really be the best thing to begin with, for as things have developed, art-history has become a kind of clearing-house (both literally and figuratively speaking) for all the other historical disciplines which, when left alone, tend to a certain self-isolation. This key position of Art History in modern Geistesgeschichte accounts also for the success of the Warburg Library in Hamburg, and it would be a magnificent idea to build up a similar thing (yet not a duplicate, thanks to the well-established traditions of your department) at Princeton.'"*²⁸¹

This was a canny manoeuvre on Panofsky's part. He made full use of his connections with Morey at Princeton, hinting at the sort of amicable relations with that University that Flexner considered so important to the success of the fledgling IAS. Flexner was also an avowed admirer of the *Kulturwissenschaftliche Bibliothek Warburg*, having visited it in 1931, and Panofsky acknowledged that Warburg's Institute was a kind of kindred spirit to Flexner's interdisciplinary School of Humanistic Studies.²⁸² Flexner would also have been made aware that Panofsky was widely considered one of the best representatives of the History of Art, and that he was, of course, available for immediate employment.

Although impressed by Panofsky's credentials, Flexner was initially hesitant to offer the German scholar a position. Especially in the early days of the IAS, Flexner was at pains to not have his institution perceived of as a threat to the already established American universities. He certainly did not want to 'stand on the toes' of Cook and NYU's College of Fine Arts.²⁸³ Panofsky however, quickly reassured Flexner that there would be no such problem were he to gain a position at the IAS.²⁸⁴ Ultimately Flexner was convinced, and in the April of 1935 he offered Panofsky a permanent faculty position in his newly formed School of Humanistic Studies, on the generous salary of \$10,000.²⁸⁵ It would seem that Cook was actually rather put out by this course of events, and by Panofsky's

²⁸¹ Memorandum of the IAS, c. April 9th 1934. Quoted in Wuttke, *Erwin Panofsky Korrespondenz*. Band I, p743, note 3.

²⁸² For Flexner's visit to Hamburg see Bonner, *Iconoclast*, p242. Flexner referred to Warburg's "superb library at Hamburg" in his 'Address' at the *Symposium on Higher Education* op. cit., p259. Though I have found no direct evidence, it seems most probable that Flexner and Panofsky would at least have heard of one another before they met in the early thirties.

²⁸³ Flexner had heard of Cook's plans to offer Panofsky a permanent place through Percy Straus, a Trustee of both NYU and the IAS.

²⁸⁴ Panofsky to Flexner, January 9th, 1935 (515).

²⁸⁵ Flexner to Panofsky, April 25th, 1935 (538).

conduct during these months. However a conciliatory agreement was arranged whereby Panofsky would continue to teach courses at NYU; though on his own terms, and only ever with the more advanced graduate students. Panofsky further eased his own conscience by suggesting that, with the money that had been raised to employ him, Cook and the College of Fine Arts could now afford to help other displaced art historians in need of employment.²⁸⁶

Panofsky's appointment at the Institute for Advanced Study was a significant coup, both for the émigré scholar himself, and for the discipline he represented. Through Panofsky's placement, the history of art had been positioned at this prestigious new research institution as an integral humanistic discipline; and this at a time when art history was far from established within the American university. Panofsky himself was now positioned among an impressive retinue of noteworthy thinkers and academics, scientists and humanists, free to collaborate and cooperate in Flexner's 'scholar's paradise'. Furthermore he was able to continue his collaboration with Charles Rufus Morey at Princeton, and to utilise Morey's already established Index of Christian Art. Panofsky was now well paid, with job security, and a new stability in his family life in Princeton. He was unburdened by undergraduate teaching and worked only ever with more advanced students – either those who he invited personally to the IAS, or the Princeton graduates who he rated highly. The rest of the time Panofsky was free to focus upon his own research. Ultimately, Panofsky had managed to establish himself in a unique and prestigious environment, apposite to his scholarly outlook, and this helped bolster and reinforce the decision he had made to fully commit himself and his family to life in America.

The émigré experience

Panofsky did not publish a great deal in the first years of his employment at the IAS. Instead, he took the time afforded him to travel abroad for the purposes of research.²⁸⁷ He also travelled widely on the east coast of America, providing lectures at different universities, expanding his list of American contacts, and generally sampling academic life in the U.S. Panofsky was certainly aware that he had landed on his feet. Travelling with his wife Dora in Europe on an all-expenses paid trip, he wrote to Flexner, "The more we see of Europe in her present shape, the more I feel like going to my knees and thanking God for having brought us to Princeton N.J., and for having given us a 'boss' like

²⁸⁶ Panofsky told Fiske Kimball, "It is largely due to my joining the Institute that NYU is able to spend some money on other scholars." May 9th, 1935 (543). On Panofsky's suggestion Cook hired Walter Friedländer and Karl Lehmann.

²⁸⁷ In 1936 Panofsky received \$1000 for almost three months extended travel to research Flemish and fifteenth-century German painting in the libraries and museums of Holland, Belgium and France.

you.”²⁸⁸ Panofsky’s appreciation of the comfort of his own situation was only amplified by his awareness of the desperate plight of so many others. In 1936 he told Paul Sachs,

*“I...am keenly aware of the contrast between my situation here and that of so many other scholars who would deserve it just as well, or even better, but had not had that amazing amount of luck that I had. This thought is, in fact, the only drop of bitterness in the cup of my existence here, and I try to help others the best I can.”*²⁸⁹

This last assertion was no empty boast. There were a huge number of displaced scholars looking for work in America in the thirties, and Panofsky made extensive efforts to help as many as he could. Because he had achieved such prominence and reputation already, Panofsky was inundated with petitions from German-born scholars suddenly in desperate need of employment. He was particularly aware that many German-Jewish art historians – most often from wealthy bourgeois families – had forged careers as private scholars, largely in order to circumvent the anti-Semitism that would hinder their career progression within the German university. These individuals thus lacked the work-experience and references required for employment in America, and Panofsky did all he could to act as a referee for those whom he knew in this position.²⁹⁰ For certain individuals Panofsky even corrected and offered pointers on their use of the English language in applications and CVs. Panofsky was able to accommodate some exiled scholars in temporary positions at the IAS,²⁹¹ but he also worked tirelessly with his American contacts, men such as Alfred Barr, Walter Cook, Charles Rufus Morey and Paul Sachs, to raise the funds or initiate the invitations that would enable displaced art historians to enter the United States. It is significant too that Panofsky himself developed a reputation among American academics, as a trusted referee. He was considered an émigré intellectual who knew what it took to ‘fit-in’, and he was increasingly sought out, and his opinion valued by different American institutions and aid agencies looking for assessments of émigré scholars, and not only historians of art.²⁹²

As the situation in Germany worsened towards the end of the thirties Panofsky found himself even more in demand and his efforts increased. By the summer of 1938 the Panofskys had moved from the temporary accommodation originally arranged by Morey to a purpose-built home on Battle Road in Princeton. That November Panofsky was in the process of having two large trees planted on his

²⁸⁸ Panofsky to Flexner, July 10th, 1936 (580).

²⁸⁹ Panofsky to Sachs, February 15th, 1936 (566).

²⁹⁰ See, for example, Panofsky to Walter W.S. Cook September 30th, 1938 (723).

²⁹¹ William Heckscher and Hans Swarzenski were the first art historians to be given temporary memberships at the IAS. Georg Swarzenski (father of Hans) and Panofsky’s Hamburg assistant Charles de Tolnay soon followed.

²⁹² Panofsky was a regular referee for the *Committee in Aid of Displaced Foreign Scholars*. Among those for whom Panofsky provided references were the orientalist Richard Salomon, the classicist Ernst Kapp, the Renaissance historian Hans Baron and the publisher Kurt Wolff.

spacious new front lawn when news of the events of *Kristallnacht* reached him. That evening he wrote to Margaret Barr,

*"Today I spent most of my time on writing affidavits, answering panic-stricken cables and sending out the prospectuses of dislocated art historians...It is a rather terrible feeling to live so comfortably while others, just as good, have to beg around."*²⁹³

The increasingly desperate plight of others, whether stuck in Germany or desperately seeking employment in America, made Panofsky all the more self-conscious and appreciative of his own good fortune and position. Though he himself was not involved in what became a quite desperate scramble for work, he did give considerable thought to the general process of scholarly acculturation as it was developing. Indeed, with his comfortable position at the IAS, and his widening network of connections – both émigré and American – Panofsky was afforded a quite unique position from which to measure the impact of the émigré scholars in America and the reception they were afforded.

Far from the rather rose-tinted picture painted with hindsight by the likes of Colin Eisler, the émigré art historians faced many difficulties in their attempts to establish themselves in America. The country remained in the grip of an economic depression in the early nineteen-thirties and within universities, just as within most other sectors of American society, there was little money and few opportunities for work. Even Walter W.S. Cook, a well-known and industrious fundraiser, was forced to admit in 1937 that the College of Fine Arts could not hope to accommodate the large numbers of displaced art historians:

*"Beyond next year I am...not very sanguine concerning my ability to add any new men as permanent members of our staff, due to the fact that I have exhausted every source of financial income in order to keep Dr Friedländer and Dr Lehmann-Hartleben as permanent full-time members, and also to carry a few other German scholars as part-time people. What has been done to date has been possible only because of a series of special donations made outside the University. Practically all these gifts will cease after the present year, and the University will then have the responsibility of carrying the entire load with very little help from outside."*²⁹⁴

Panofsky was well aware of these financial considerations and restrictions, and of the potential problem of accommodating the increasing number of exiled scholars. Writing to Paul Sachs, in the hope of securing a lecture placement for Richard Salomon at Harvard, Panofsky felt compelled to

²⁹³ Panofsky to Margaret Barr, November 9th, 1938 (731). Earlier that summer Panofsky wrote to Flexner, "It is a queer and embarrassing thought how much we have benefitted by the same event that has spelled disaster for so many thousands." August 25th, 1938 (715).

²⁹⁴ Cook to Margaret Barr, May 4th, 1937 (636).

acknowledge, “that even a great and hospitable country like yours...is bound to reach a point of saturation.”²⁹⁵

Widespread financial constraints meant that émigré scholars were competing with Americans for any jobs that did become available, and this often occasioned a pronounced anti-immigrant sentiment.²⁹⁶ On the rare occasion that an émigré scholar did gain a permanent position there was always a certain level of apprehension about how their American colleagues would respond. In November 1937, for example, Panofsky gave voice to such concerns when he wrote to Walter Cook,

“You may know that Dr. Wolfgang Stechow was appointed, about a year ago, as associate Professor at the University of Wisconsin at Madison. One of his colleagues, a man called Schmeckebier, has now not been reappointed for the next year and, very understandably, Stechow feels rather badly about this because the whole thing might create the impression that his, Stechow’s, presence has something to do with the silent dismissal of said Schmeckebier...It really would be too bad if people began to think that foreign scholars were crowding out the Americans in academic life and so Stechow has asked me to help in finding Schmeckebier another job.”²⁹⁷

Although Cook was obviously attuned to Panofsky’s concerns, his quick response would have done little to assuage them,

“As for the Stechow-Schmeckebier matter, I know all about it and have been trying for the past month to find a place for the latter. I saw him in Chicago and know the whole situation. The affair is most unfortunate and I sincerely hope it will be possible to find him a good position, because people are already beginning to talk about the matter, and it would make a very bad odour if a place were not found for Schmeckebier....Stechow would be a welcome addition to any department, but I am afraid that [the head of the department of art history at Wisconsin] was too precipitate and should have kept both men.”²⁹⁸

For those German-born scholars seeking work in the American museum world the situation was, if anything, worse. Contacted by the economist Friedrich von Hayek about securing a position for the Austrian art historian Ludwig Münz, Panofsky was compelled to relate how, in regards to American universities, “the outlook is very dark.” He then continued,

²⁹⁵ Panofsky to Sachs, February 15th, 1936 (566).

²⁹⁶ This was not a phenomenon restricted to the world of academia. As Stephanie Barron has noted, “Although the refugees from Nazi Germany were often mature, well-educated professionals, general sentiment in Depression era America was anti-immigrant. Many were fearful that new arrivals would take away jobs from Americans. In a survey published in 1939 in *Fortune*, more than 80 per cent of the respondents expressed negative feelings about the admittance of European refugees.” ‘European Artists in Exile: A Reading Between the Lines’, in *Exiles and Émigrés*, op. cit., pp11-29; p19.

²⁹⁷ Panofsky to Cook, November 22nd, 1937 (676).

²⁹⁸ Cook to Panofsky, November 24th, 1937 (678).

*"I am sorry to say that the outlook with museums or private collections is even darker, in as much as these institutions are extremely reluctant to appoint foreigners. I know of only one case in which a German has been appointed to a museum post since 1933, and this case has aroused a great amount of opposition."*²⁹⁹

Émigré academics were understandably wary of being considered a 'foreign' imposition in a financially stretched American workplace. For the many Jews among them such concerns were exacerbated by the anti-Semitism they encountered, both within the American university and within American 'polite society'.³⁰⁰ On more than one occasion Panofsky commented upon the fact that he was not welcome at the big American hotels because he was a Jew.³⁰¹ And he and Dora certainly experienced anti-Semitism in Princeton. William Heckscher, a young student of Panofsky in Hamburg who became a close friend thereafter, provides a vivid account of experiencing such prejudice during his earliest visits to Princeton. "On one occasion", Heckscher recalled,

Dora Panofsky and I attended a posh cocktail party at which I learned that Wasps are not for nothing called wasps. For some unfortunate reason the discussion centred on Hitler's Germany in general and concentration camps in particular. Here indeed was a chance to speak about what at that time must have been (as it is now) a bit of a mystery to the majority of our American listeners. At one point, our hostess said she had something special to tell us, and she moved Dora and me to the vestibule of her house and pointing to the open door she said: 'Out you go! I will not allow you revengeful Jews to spoil a perfectly decent party.'³⁰²

In the more candid moments of his correspondence Panofsky also remarked on the prejudice he encountered in America. In 1936, for example, he informed Fritz Saxl that he was reckoning on "a reunion of our whole circle of friends in Honduras or Liberia, probably by 1940. By then things will have gone so far here too that Jews and Liberals will no longer be welcome."³⁰³

Anti-Semitism was certainly manifest within the American university in the thirties and forties, in an unofficial (but no less rigorously enforced) exclusion of Jewish students. This was especially the case within the more established Ivy League institutions.³⁰⁴ Panofsky had been fortunate in that he secured a place at the IAS, an American institution that employed scholars with absolutely no regard

²⁹⁹ Panofsky to Freidrich von Hayek, May 3rd, 1938 (696).

³⁰⁰ See, K. Michels, Art History, *German Jewish Identity and the Emigration of Iconology*, op.cit., pp 167-179; p171.

³⁰¹ See, Panofsky to Walter Friedländer, July 1st, 1944 (946), & Panofsky to Mildred and Bob Burrage, May 29th, 1943 (900).

³⁰² W. Heckscher, 'Heckscher Arrives in Princeton', *Princeton History: The Journal of the Historical Society of Princeton*, 6, 1987, pp1-5; p4-5.

³⁰³ Panofsky to Saxl, December 7th, 1936 (606).

³⁰⁴ See, J. Karabel, *The Chosen: The Hidden History of Admission and Exclusion at Harvard, Yale and Princeton*, 2005; & M.G. Synott, *The Half-Opened Door: Discrimination and Admissions at Harvard, Yale and Princeton, 1900-1970*, 1979.

to religious persuasion or ethnicity.³⁰⁵ It would seem that he was also fortunate to have had his two sons accepted at Princeton University, and this helps explain why he remained particularly grateful to Charles Rufus Morey for his efforts on their behalf. Once again, Panofsky was fully conscious of his own good fortune. Though he had not felt the strictures of anti-Semitism in his own professional life in America he fully acknowledged how this latent prejudice could affect the accommodation of his fellow Jewish émigré scholars. On one occasion, for example, having provided the American Fiske Kimball with a reference for the Jewish art historian Emil Kaufmann, Panofsky suggested to Meyer Schapiro, “It would be all the better if you were not to write an extra letter to Fiske, lest he feels enmeshed in a Jewish conspiracy.”³⁰⁶

The American intellectual environment

Émigré scholars were confronted in America with what was a markedly different academic and intellectual environment. And in terms of understanding Panofsky’s migration it is important to re-examine the notion that “The reception of the émigré scholars was intellectually frictionless.”³⁰⁷ The émigré scholars encountered an academic and intellectual environment that was ‘democratic’ in nature. Panofsky noted in 1935, for example, that it was the role of the American university to “turn out the greatest possible number of the best possible students.”³⁰⁸ This was very much different to the *Bildung* model of education, where the university was, in effect, a proving ground for a cultural elite; an environment in which the individual was supposed to enact their own particular self-cultivation. In further contrast to the situation in Germany, the American academic landscape was entirely dominated by the positivist methods and rationale of the ‘scientific’ disciplines. Christine McCorkel has pointed out how in the American intellectual climate,

Empirical observation of data and testable conclusions – ‘science’ – became a criterion of validity – a theme in popular epistemology – that affected all disciplines...In becoming ‘scientific’ [academic disciplines] also became democratic. The idea that knowledge was a matter of factual, repeatable observation included the assumption of its accessibility and relevance to a mass audience.³⁰⁹

³⁰⁵ It has been claimed, mistakenly, that the IAS was set up specifically to help Jewish scholars and students. This had been the original intention of Bamberger and Fuld; however, Flexner convinced them that to create an exclusively ‘Jewish’ school would only exacerbate anti-Semitic feeling.

³⁰⁶ Panofsky to Schapiro, January 19th, 1945 (978).

³⁰⁷ Christopher Wood, ‘Art History’s Normative Renaissance’, in *The Italian Renaissance in the Twentieth Century: Acts of an International Conference, Villa I Tatti, June 9th -11th*, A. Gerioco, M. Roche, S. Fiorella (eds.), 1999, pp65-92; p66.

³⁰⁸ Panofsky to Max M. Warburg, September 20th, 1935 (548).

³⁰⁹ C. McCorkel, *Sense and Sensibility*, op. cit., p38-9.

As McCorkel points out, practitioners in the humanistic disciplines in America also aspired to the positivist standards of the natural sciences. For the émigré scholar this constituted a markedly different approach to knowledge creation. As the émigré social scientist Franz Neumann noted,

The German exile, bred in the veneration of theory and history, and contempt for empiricism and pragmatism, entered a diametrically opposed intellectual climate: optimistic, empirically oriented, a-historical, but also self-righteous.³¹⁰

According to these positivist standards, abstract theoretical ideas were most often considered so subjective, so speculative and 'unverifiable', as to be meaningless. The emphasis in the historical disciplines in America was certainly upon cold hard 'facts', and the manipulation and practical application of these 'facts' through demonstrably useful methodologies. In such an environment practicality and usefulness was prized, and the émigré scholar found that there just was not the same concern with the more theoretical exigencies of disciplinary practice. As the historians Charles Beard and Alfred Vagts noted in 1937,

American historians have no philosophy of history; they want none; they distrust it...Few of our universities, it seems, offer courses in the history of historiography or pay much attention to what the historian thinks he is doing when he is taking mountains of notes and selecting and arranging his 'facts'.

According to Beard and Vagts, the typical American historian,

...immersed in documentation, annotation and compilation is suspicious of a priori notions and philosophic questions. He regards them as promoting loose thinking, a distortion of facts and a general confusion in the name of system....[T]hey regard anyone who bothers with [critical or historical philosophy] as an intruder or mystic who is trying to impose something upon them.³¹¹

As Beard and Vagts infer, the American antipathy towards speculative philosophy and theory could manifest itself as an aversion to 'German' or 'Teutonic' influence. The abstruse theory and the recondite philosophical ideas and language typical of much German scholarship were often repudiated by the American scholar as forms of intellectual elitism. In the 1930s Americans would look unfavourably upon foreign colleagues who failed to make themselves readily 'understandable', and so the émigrés often found they had to tone down the more challenging theoretical content in their teaching. Karen Michels notes, for example, that at New York University,

American colleagues expressed their general critique of the refugees' 'pedantic' and 'single-minded Teutonic' teaching program and requested...a higher degree of

³¹⁰ F.L. Neumann, 'The Social Sciences', in Crawford, *The Cultural Migration*, op. cit., pp4-26; p19.

³¹¹ C. Beard & A. Vagts, 'Currents of Thought in Historiography', in *The American Historical Review*, 42:3, April 1937, pp460-483; p464-5.

popularisation...Scholars now found themselves having to replace theoretical concerns with the imparting of facts, to structure their material more strongly, and to define chronological and geographical categories more broadly.³¹²

Even Panofsky, who had made every effort to relate to and engage with his new audience, was aware that some American colleagues still considered his approach “too philosophically minded”³¹³ or “too highbrow.”³¹⁴

Many of the displaced scholars struggled to adapt to the alterity of the American environment. Unlike other immigrants to the country, who would generally be from a lower social and economic standing, for German humanist scholars the move to the United States most often constituted a distinct ‘step down’ in status. In such a positivistic environment, where knowledge was valued for its empirical factuality, its applicability and its ‘usefulness’, the émigré humanist found that they simply were not accorded the same kudos for their individual cultivation (*Bildung*). In America the academic was conceived of less as a respected ‘culture-bearer’, a model of individual ‘cultivation’, and more an ‘instructor’ whose role it was to act as guarantor of an authenticated knowledge. With a previously enjoyed status and societal cachet thus left behind, émigré scholars could often *feel* superior, but in the new intellectual climate, where they were largely ignorant (or even entirely disdainful) of the rules of the game, they could be viewed by their American colleagues in the opposite way. The fact that many émigrés did indeed exude a haughty and detached deportment did not endear them to their American associates. This goes some way to explaining the reticence American employers showed in terms of taking on ‘untried’ émigrés academics. There was always the worry that a displaced scholar would fail to establish effective and productive relations with their American colleagues and students. Walter Cook, a man certainly experienced in these matters, would write in 1937,

*“It has been my experience that no college president will recommend or confirm the appointment of a foreign scholar unless he has previously visited this country and is known personally to the authorities.”*³¹⁵

Cook recognised that some of the émigré art historians had been able to adapt quickly to life in America, but he was also conscious that “there have been one or two men who have been failures.”³¹⁶ In this vein Cook suggested that Panofsky’s former Berlin classmate, Alexander Dorner,

³¹² Michels, *Pineapple and Mayonnaise – Why Not?* op. cit., p58-9.

³¹³ Panofsky to Margaret Barr, November 18th, 1932 (337).

³¹⁴ Panofsky to Margaret Barr, March 9th, 1933 (357). For other émigré scholars who faced similar issues. See, K. Greenberg ‘Crossing the Boundary: German Refugee Scholars and the American Academic Tradition’, in *German and American Universities: Mutual Influences – Past and Present*, 1992, pp.67-79; p67.

³¹⁵ Walter W.S. Cook to Margaret Barr, May 4th, 1937 (636).

³¹⁶ Ibid.

cross the Atlantic to provide lectures at American universities free of charge, in order to prove himself to prospective American employers.³¹⁷ Panofsky made great efforts to help his friend and fellow émigré throughout the 1930s and 40s, but Dorner was one who did struggle to adapt to life in America.³¹⁸

Panofsky was well aware of the difficulties that other émigrés had in adapting to American life. Corresponding with Paul Sachs, in regards to finding a place for the German art historian Paul Frankl, Panofsky was forced to cede,

*"[I]t is unfortunately quite true that his whole intellectual attitude, coupled with his linguistic difficulties will always prevent him from achieving what may be called popularity in this country."*³¹⁹

And when asked to provide a supplementary reference for the Renaissance scholar Hans Baron in 1948, Panofsky felt compelled to respond,

*"Concerning your questions...I can only say that I personally never had any difficulties in getting along with him, though I have heard from others that he may have a little of that proverbial European conceit which so many immigrant scholars find so hard to shake off. However, I personally have never noticed this."*³²⁰

These might, on the face of it, seem rather equivocal appraisals of two fellow exiles desperate to secure employment. However, it must be remembered that Panofsky was establishing a reputation among his American colleagues as a dependable source of reference. He obviously believed that to provide an unequivocally positive reference for a German scholar who subsequently proved to be a 'failure' would undermine his efficacy as a referee for the many others who required his help. It is the case moreover, that Paul Frankl was considered somewhat obtuse and recondite, even in Germany,³²¹ and Hans Baron had such difficulty adapting to scholarly life in America that he was eventually forced to retrain and seek work as a librarian.³²² It should also be pointed out that

³¹⁷ Ibid.

³¹⁸ Ines Katenhusen, 'Alexander Dorner (1893-1957): A German Art Historian in the United States', *AICGS/DAAD Working Paper Series. A Publication of the American Institute for Contemporary German Studies*, 2002, pp1-12.

³¹⁹ Panofsky to Sachs, April 24th, 1939 (756).

³²⁰ Panofsky to William Aydelotte, March 3rd, 1948 (1195).

³²¹ Eric Fernie describes Frankl's *The System of Art Historical Knowledge*, for example, as "a thousand page study of the theory of the development of architectural form which sank like a stone even in Germany because of its length and its impenetrable language." *Art History and its Methods*, op. cit., p246.

³²² For Hans Baron's difficulties in America see K. Schiller, 'Hans Baron's Humanism', in *Storia della Storiografia*, 34, 1998, pp51-99. Schiller alludes to Baron's reputation by quoting one prospective American employer thus: "I am a little afraid of Germans, because, as you know, they are apt to think that no one not educated in Germany has the faintest suspicion of the meaning of scholarship. Such a person, if Dr Baron should fall into that classification, would simply be impossible for us." Stanley Pargellis to Frank Aydelotte, December 24th, 1948; in Schiller, p77.

Panofsky went to considerable lengths to accommodate both of these men at the IAS. At this particular research institute there was not the same requirement for cultivating and maintaining productive and harmonious relationships with either American students or American colleagues. Taking into account Frankl's difficulties with the English-language Panofsky secured for him a recurrent research membership, with no teaching commitments, for the large part of his American career.³²³ And it was through Panofsky's auspices that Baron was afforded the IAS position which allowed him to complete the bulk of his major English-language publication, *The Crisis of the Early Italian Renaissance: Civic Humanism and Republican Liberty in an Age of Classicism and Tyranny* (1953).³²⁴

Though Panofsky had established a large group of American contacts who trusted and valued his opinion he was, of course, also an émigré himself, adapting to what was a markedly different working environment. Panofsky was very much concerned not to stand out or to appear at all conspicuous as a 'foreigner'. In 1935 he was approached by Ed Murrow who asked for a contribution to a publication documenting the responses of exiled scholars to the American environment. Having worked for the *Emergency Committee in Aid of Displaced Foreign Scholars* Murrow was keen that noted émigré scholars present their "reactions to and criticism of American education in the particular discipline which he represents."³²⁵ Panofsky certainly recognised the merit of Murrow's project, but he was not persuaded to provide a contribution. He obviously believed that it was too soon, and the atmosphere within the American academic environment too delicate for an émigré to speak out. As Panofsky replied to Murrow,

*"A record of the experiences made by the German scholars now active in this country is certainly valuable, [however] it puts the contributors in a rather delicate position in that they might fear to appear ungrateful or to make themselves unpleasant if they offer too many criticisms."*³²⁶

Panofsky did not consider it wise nor prudent to voice his reactions to or criticisms of an environment into which he was endeavouring to integrate. Many other refugee intellectuals echoed Panofsky's sentiments in declining Murrow's request, and plans for the publication were eventually scrapped.³²⁷ Only weeks after his original letter to Panofsky Murrow wrote again,

³²³ Frankl held a place at the IAS from 1940 until his death in 1962.

³²⁴ Baron held a membership at the IAS from 1944 until 1949. The American Philosophical Association and the Rockefeller Foundation paid for his and his family's living expenses during this time.

³²⁵ Edward R. Murrow to Panofsky, January 22nd, 1935 (517). Murrow was at this point the Assistant Secretary of the *ECADFS*.

³²⁶ Panofsky to Edward R. Murrow, January 26th, 1935 (519).

³²⁷ See, K. Greenberg, *Crossing the Boundary*, op. cit., p73-4.

*"I have now become convinced that it would probably not be in the best interests of the German scholars now in this country to undertake immediate publication, although I have lost none of my belief of the value to American education of such a study."*³²⁸

Hyper-conscious of his position as an émigré Panofsky was at pains not to stand out in any way. He was extremely wary of any potential backlash that could occur as a result of his work being perceived as some kind of foreign imposition in the world of American scholarship. He was rather aggrieved therefore, by an article published in 1938 in the *Magazine of Art*, in which an American author implied that there was indeed some qualitative distinction between 'American' art scholarship and the kind of émigré art history that Panofsky represented. In his consideration of American museum practices the editor of the *Magazine of Art* noted that, "during their initial stages American museums were directed in an unscientific if gentlemanly manner." He then went on to express his belief that this had changed "with the advent of scholarship and the subsequent influx of distinguished foreign teachers." Citing Panofsky by name, he then proceeded to lament the fact that the work of American practitioners failed to match that of their German-born counterparts:

Scholarship in the field of art suffers especially from those human limitations which do not provide enough Einsteins for the field of science, or enough Panofskys for the field of art history. Rarer than tenacity, orderly research, or the learning required by modern standards of art scholarship, is the human capacity to digest and synthesise; and rarer still is the mental scope of the great philosopher. In a world filled with degree-making factories many are diligent but few are chosen.³²⁹

Panofsky was rather alarmed by the inferences that could be drawn from such sentiment, articulated in a prominent American journal. The émigré scholar replied to the *Magazine of Art* swiftly, and with the intention that his letter be published in the next issue,

*"In a recent editorial...my name has been mentioned in a connection which might lead some readers to believe that the work which I am trying to do in the field of art history is methodically different from, and qualitatively superior to the researches of scholars affiliated with the Walters Art Gallery. I feel it is my duty to state that no such difference in scope or method let alone in value, can be proved to exist."*³³⁰

Panofsky was obviously wary of any suggestion that he or his fellow émigrés should be thought of as 'better than' their American counterparts. In a subsequent letter to his American confidante Margaret Barr, the German scholar articulated his concerns even more vociferously,

³²⁸ Edward R. Murrow to Panofsky, February 13th, 1935 (523).

³²⁹ 'Extremes Meet in Baltimore', *Magazine of Art*, 31:11, November 1938, p615 & p666.

³³⁰ Panofsky to the Editor of *The Magazine of Art*, November 22nd, 1938 (738).

“The article in the ‘Magazine of Art’ has already been brought to my attention, and I was pretty sore about it...I consider it tactless, to say the least, to tell American art historians and physicists that two German Jews are better than they are and have written a rather strong...letter to the editor of said Magazine which will be printed in the February number. It simply states that there is no difference in scope, let alone in quality, between the work I am trying to do and that which meets with the disapproval of the author of the article.”³³¹

Panofsky’s ‘American’ persona

These examples show that, although Panofsky was secure in his position at the IAS, and somewhat sheltered there from the practical difficulties of an enforced exile, he was still very much alert to the predicament of the émigré scholar. Indeed, Panofsky’s privileged position, as both a prime representative of the émigré art historians, and a trusted source of reference among his American colleagues, afforded what was a unique perspective on the process of *mutual* acculturation that was enacted after 1933. Panofsky was able to understand this process from both sides, as it were. This ‘outsider as insider’ position meant Panofsky was acutely sensitive and reactive to the impression he and, by extension, his émigré colleagues, were making in America. Understanding this fact helps to explain the ‘persona’ that Panofsky worked hard to cultivate in the United States.

Having made a firm decision to remain in America Panofsky was adamant from the earliest point that he did not want to remain an émigré. As soon as he was able to he applied for American citizenship, and he received his certificate of naturalisation in 1940.³³² Panofsky was very much conscious of the alterity of the American environment and had proven himself willing and able to adapt. Indeed, this had been a major factor in his early success in the United States. He was very mindful of the complex and involved nature of the acculturation process, and as such, was determined not to appear at all conspicuous or to be stigmatised as a ‘foreigner’. Ultimately, Panofsky resolved to enact his process of naturalisation and acculturation in as seemingly smooth and effortless a manner as possible.

This helps to explain why Panofsky was always at pains to point out that he had been first *invited* to America as a guest, and why he always made every effort to accentuate his longstanding connections and associations with the United States. In an autobiographical essay published in 1953, for example, Panofsky noted,

³³¹ Panofsky to Margaret Barr, December 12th, 1938 (740).

³³² Panofsky applied for American citizenship in 1936 and he received his certificate of naturalisation on June 7th, 1940.

I first came to this country in the fall of 1931 upon the invitation of New York University. I was then professor of the history of art at Hamburg...(T)he authorities were not only glad to grant me a leave of absence for one semester but subsequently consented to an arrangement whereby I was permitted to spend alternative terms in Hamburg and New York. Thus for three successive years I commuted, as it were, across the Atlantic.³³³

This, of course, is a strictly truthful account. It is interesting though, that Panofsky does engender an exaggerated idea of the length of his association with NYU before 1933. The émigré scholar had actually completed only one semester's work (fall term, 1931-2) in New York, and was back there on just his second visit (fall term, 1932-3) when he heard of his dismissal from Hamburg. Two short stays then, but spread over three different years. It is significant too that even although Panofsky's autobiographical impressions attest to 'Three Decades of Art History in the United States', when this essay was published Panofsky had actually been 'transplanted' for less than twenty years. These might seem rather trivial points to raise, however they are revealing. Despite his very real, early reservations, Panofsky was always eager to emphasise that he had an extremely long-standing association with America, and that he was entirely at ease, comfortable and 'at home' in his new environment. This was part of the *persona* Panofsky cultivated in order to best facilitate a successful acculturation. Indeed, the émigré scholar actively tried to engender the impression that his move to America was simply an act of personal volition; as if the enforced exile and acculturation were hardly a consideration at all. This would explain why, having interviewed Panofsky for a newspaper article in 1941 one American journalist could claim, "Mr Panofsky said today that he had loved this country even before anyone thought of Hitler and had always planned to come here someday for good."³³⁴

Panofsky is often portrayed as the epitome of that familiar trope, the 'exile in paradise'.³³⁵ However, it is important to acknowledge the extent to which this 'persona' was the result of a conscious and determined effort. Panofsky's private letters demonstrate that this was, in large part, a projection born of his American experiences in the 1930s; a persona cultivated in order to more easily facilitate the process of scholarly acculturation. This is not to say that Panofsky was altogether discontented with his lot. However, his American *persona* could be said to have something of the *sprezzatura* of Castiglione's 'Courtier' about it, in that all the difficulties and complications involved in acclimatising to American life were notable only by their absence from what was a smooth and *seemingly* effortless performance.

³³³ Panofsky, *Three Decades*, op. cit., p82.

³³⁴ Bright W. Padgitt, 'Erwin Panofsky, Noted Writer is in North Carolina', *Asheville Times*, Friday August 22nd, 1941, p8.

³³⁵ Norman Cantor refers to Panofsky as "the prototype of the happy, highly visible professor." See note 89.

It is with this in mind that we must evaluate, or re-evaluate the scholarship of ‘the American Panofsky’. Panofsky’s English language works are now renowned for the familiarity and ease of their prose. However, this mellifluous rhetorical style should not mask or obfuscate the nature of what this émigré scholar was attempting to do. From his earliest time in America Panofsky considered himself a kind of cultural envoy of a particularly ‘German’ tradition of *Kunstwissenschaft*. As he related to the American scholar William Ivins in 1934,

“I honestly feel that you as well as some of my students give me the credit for what, in reality, is due to a scientific tradition of which I am a very modest part...the very method of my work, a method which perhaps was not so well known in America, is almost a matter of course in [Germany]...I came to your country as a mere messenger or representative of this tradition, bringing with me some of the specimens of the fruit that we endeavour to grow for several decades, and I feel a little bit ashamed when you believe me to be a kind of innovator.”³³⁶

Five or six years living in America had only affirmed for Panofsky the alterity and difference of the American approach to art scholarship. However put out he professed to be by the article in the *Magazine of Art* Panofsky was, in America, attempting to provide a *digestible* translation of what was an essentially ‘foreign’ approach to understanding art.

³³⁶ Panofsky to William Ivins, March 14th, 1932 (305).

3. Contribution

American art scholarship

When Erwin Panofsky arrived in the United States the history of art was not fully established as an autonomous academic discipline, certainly not to the extent it had been in Germany since as far back as the middle of the nineteenth century. The analysis of art was still largely regarded as a subsidiary area of scholarly interest in American universities, usually taking place within departments of archaeology or classics.³³⁷ The strongest tradition of American art interest in the 1930s remained 'appreciationism'; a rather nebulous term, but essentially an approach in which knowledge of art was considered a matter of 'taste' or 'sensitivity'. As such, it remained the province of those in the upper echelons of society, what one commentator has recently described as "the independently wealthy WASP cliché."³³⁸ As Kathryn Brush notes of this period, "The study of art history was not envisaged as a profession as it was in Germany, but rather as an area of cultural study that could lend polish to a gentleman's education."³³⁹

Charles Eliot Norton was the first American professorial appointment in 'Fine Art', in 1875. Norton taught at Harvard on 'The History of the Fine Arts as Connected with Literature', and his lectures have been described as speeches on 'Modern Morals as Illustrated by the Art of the Ancients'.³⁴⁰ Colin Eisler provides some indication of what these performances would have entailed, describing how, "Norton eschewed the stereopticon and the hydro-oxygen lantern slides...relying upon his eloquence to paint the work of art in words."³⁴¹ Norton's emphasis was upon the individual's emotional response to an artwork. Through verbal example he would instruct his students on how to appreciate for themselves the qualities and values inherent in artworks. Norton was vigorously and notoriously opposed to the kind of 'theoretical' or historical-interpretive approaches that were *de rigueur* in Germany. He believed that the theoretical apparatuses erected by German scholars as systems for understanding art were so abstracted from the actual artwork as to be useless.³⁴² Indeed, this influential American scholar denounced 'Teutonic' scholarship as an overwrought and elitist wall of erudition that hindered the individual's immediate appreciation of an artwork. As Eisler

³³⁷ R. Goldwater, 'The Teaching of Art in the Colleges of the United States', *College Art Journal*, 2:4, 1943, pp3-31; p27.

³³⁸ J. Hart, *Erwin Panofsky and Karl Mannheim*, op. cit., p562.

³³⁹ K. Brush, 'Marburg, Harvard, and Purpose-Built Architecture for Art History in 1927', in *Art History and its Institutions: Foundations of a Discipline*, E. Mansfield ed., pp65-84; p69.

³⁴⁰ Eisler, *American Art History*, op. cit., p65.

³⁴¹ Ibid.

³⁴² D. Preziosi, 'The Question of Art History', *Critical Inquiry*, 18:2, winter 1992, pp363-386; p376, n.28.

recounts, Norton “deplored the effects of study abroad upon his students, from which they returned ‘Germanised pedants...ill taught in Germany by the masters of useless learning’.”³⁴³ Norton himself certainly made no attempt to build, or even to reference the kind of framework in which any wider historical understanding of ‘art’ or ‘artistic development’ could be situated.

Norton was hugely influential in the development of American art scholarship, and his approach held sway in many quarters in the 1930s.³⁴⁴ Panofsky had encountered something of this tradition at the home of Mrs Crane in New York. And he also found that the preponderance of ‘appreciationism’ within the American university meant there was little to no attempt made to confront the exigencies of any ‘historical’ approach to art. This was an academic environment far removed from that in which Panofsky had issued his early ‘theoretical’ essays.

It is true that Panofsky had established productive relationships with a select group of American scholars who, in their attempts to professionalise the discipline of art history, were in many ways predisposed to ‘German’ scholarship. And he was certainly gratified as an émigré by the prestige and kudos, not to mention the security, that such associations afforded him. However, the early attempts by figures such as Morey, Cook and Sachs to establish the discipline in America had their own particularly ‘American’ character.³⁴⁵ Having taken the opportunity in the 1930s to assess these developments Panofsky remained very much cognisant of their difference to what he himself considered proper *Kunstwissenschaft*.

Christine McCorkel has shown how the early American efforts to institutionalise the discipline of art history developed in large part as a reaction to the elitism and dilettantism associated with ‘appreciationism’. In response to the idea that knowledge about art should remain a matter of individual sensibility, American scholars looked to the positivistic standards of ‘science’ for their professional validation. As McCorkel writes,

The hope that art history would become scientific was in part a rejection of its former role as a mere amusement for the cultured. In becoming ‘scientific’ it also became democratic. The idea that knowledge was a matter of factual, repeatable observation included the assumption of its accessibility and relevance to a mass audience. Where finely honed taste was of dubious value to a relentlessly practical

³⁴³ Eisler, *American Art History*, op. cit., p65.

³⁴⁴ Bernard Berenson is perhaps the most famous of Norton’s Harvard students.

³⁴⁵ Kathryn Brush has done much to bring to light the particular character of this early ‘American’ art history. See for example, K. Brush, ‘The Unshaken Tree: Walter W. S. Cook on German *Kunstwissenschaft* in 1924’, *Zeitschrift des Deutschen Vereins für Kunstwissenschaft*, 52/53, 1998/99, pp24-51; ‘German *Kunstwissenschaft* and the Practice of Art History in America after World War One. Interrelationships, Exchanges, Contexts’, *Marburger Jahrbuch für Kunstwissenschaft*, 26, 1999, pp7-36; ‘Paul Clemen and Art History in America, 1907-1939’, *Jahrbuch der rheinischen Denkmalpflege*, 39, 2004, pp9-22.

middle class, the importance of soberly ordered facts could not so easily be challenged.³⁴⁶

Replacing the 'subjectivity' of appreciationism with a scientific 'objectivity'— an emphasis upon empirical observation and classification – American art scholars in the twenties and thirties attempted to establish their discipline in congruence with a 'democratic' outlook.³⁴⁷ They were constantly pressed to justify their subject in terms of the rationale of disciplines such as mathematics, business and chemistry;³⁴⁸ and in such an environment the very practicality and productivity of disciplinary 'method' – the management and manipulation of art-historical 'facts' – itself provided a kind of scholarly legitimation.

This helps explain what figures such as Sachs, Cook and Porter had looked for in the work of their German counterparts, and why they were particularly drawn to the work of Adolph Goldschmidt and Heinrich Wölfflin. Goldschmidt had been invited to America by Sachs and Porter on different occasions in the 20s and 30s, whereupon he is reported to have "enjoyed the status of a German art historical superstar."³⁴⁹ Goldschmidt's popularity and appeal stemmed from the fact that the physical and formal properties of the artwork – its very 'object-ness' – always provided for him the starting point for any analysis.³⁵⁰ For Goldschmidt's American admirers, the idea that the work of art could be treated as an innately evidential object, open to immediate empirical analysis, provided the basis for a pragmatic and (literally) 'matter of fact' disciplinary practice. This noted German scholar seemed to proffer an 'archaeological' or 'scientific' approach that circumvented any requirement for subjective or speculative theory.³⁵¹ The work of Heinrich Wölfflin was lauded for similar reasons. Wölfflin had famously developed a fecund methodology based upon the isolation and close examination of the formal properties of artworks. Wölfflin's establishment of polarised artistic categories facilitated the classification of artworks into different 'styles'. And once again, American practitioners considered this a means of getting to grips with the work of art in an empirical or 'scientific' manner.³⁵² It was the very 'object-ivity' of these approaches that made Goldschmidt and Wölfflin so appealing to their positivist counterparts on the other side of the Atlantic. The treatment

³⁴⁶ McCorkel, *Sense and Sensibility*, op. cit., p39.

³⁴⁷ See, T. Reese 'Mapping Interdisciplinarity', *The Art Bulletin*, 77:4, December 1995, pp554-549; p546.

³⁴⁸ K. Brush, 'Adolph Goldschmidt in the Wilds of America', in *Adolph Goldschmidt (1863-1944). Normal Art History im 20. Jahrhundert*, Gunnar Bands and Heinrich Dilly eds., 2007, pp 183-207; p200.

³⁴⁹ K. Brush, *ibid*, p183. Udo Kultermann also suggests, "it is fair to say that Goldschmidt virtually transplanted German art history to America." *The History of Art History*, op. cit., p195.

³⁵⁰ Brush, *Goldschmidt in the 'Wilds' of 1920s America*, p186.

³⁵¹ See Brush, *German Kunstwissenschaft and the Practice of Art History*, op. cit., p13.

³⁵² As McCorkel writes, "Without doubt, it is his isolation of the work of art, and his exacting development of an objective method for analysing it that are at the heart of Wölfflin's attraction." *Sense and Sensibility*, p40.

of the artwork as an evidential object, open to immediate empirical analysis, seemed to provide the foundation for a productive and legitimate discipline.

These were, of course, rather reductive readings of two sophisticated, and quite different, approaches to the study of art.³⁵³ Early American art historians had adopted from German art historians certain methodological procedures that suited their needs and their intellectual proclivities, but they largely ignored the theoretical bases upon which these procedures were founded, just as they refrained from giving countenance to the historical or theoretical implications of their 'scientific' approaches. Such readings were in line with the intellectual temper of American academia, and as such they mirrored the treatment afforded to the great German historian Ranke by the American historical profession at large. As Georg G. Iggers has pointed out,

Unable to understand the context of Ranke's historical thought, American historians detached his critical analysis of documents, which they understood and which suited their need to give to history scientific respectability, from his idealistic philosophy, which was alien to them...Ranke thus came to be viewed by almost all historians in the United States...as the father of 'scientific' history, as a non-philosophical historian concerned with the establishment of facts.³⁵⁴

Thus, somewhat conversely, both the 'appreciationist' and 'scientific' models of American art history were, for a German scholar such as Panofsky, less than 'historical'. In 1934 the émigré art historian rounded upon appreciationism in a short book review which he described as "a defence of art history".³⁵⁵ But he was also less than impressed by any 'scientific' approach that concentrated on so-called 'facts' without acknowledging or confronting the subjective and theoretical nature of art-historical practice. For Panofsky this constituted an exceedingly shallow and unsatisfactory translation of the German conception of *Wissenschaft*. Though it is true that he had described himself to one of his earliest American acquaintances as a representative of a "scientific tradition,"³⁵⁶ it is significant that upon becoming better acquainted with the American intellectual environment Panofsky never again used the English word 'scientific' in reference to his own work.

³⁵³ For a more even appraisal see, K. Brush, *The Shaping of Art History*, op. cit., & J. Hart, 'Reinterpreting Heinrich Wölfflin: Neo-Kantianism and Hermeneutics', *Art Journal*, 42:4, winter 1982, pp292-300.

³⁵⁴ Iggers, 'The Image of Ranke in American and German Historical Thought', *History and Theory*, 2:1, 1962, pp17-40; p18.

³⁵⁵ E. Panofsky, 'Review of *Plastic Redirection in 20th Century Painting*, by James Johnson Sweeney', *The Bulletin of the Museum of Modern Art*, 2:2, November 1934, p3.

³⁵⁶ Panofsky to William Ivins, March 14th, 1932 (305).

The History of Art as a Humanistic Discipline (1938)

After living in America for around four or five years, Panofsky found himself in a somewhat delicate position. Having taken stock of the academic and intellectual climate he had quite particular and significant concerns, with American approaches to scholarship in general, and to art scholarship in particular. However, as an émigré academic he was also extremely sensitive to the kind of reaction that might occur were he to voice his criticisms or counsel publicly.

Panofsky was given the opportunity to address his concerns in 1938, when he was asked to provide one of the Spencer Trask Lectures at a symposium held in Princeton on 'The Meaning of the Humanities'. Panofsky received the invitation from the Princeton philosopher T.M. Greene, a Kant scholar with an avowed interest in the theoretical foundations of the various humanistic disciplines. There was an obvious affinity between Greene and Panofsky and the two men had established a friendly and collaborative relationship in the Princeton environs. Throughout the 1930s and early 40s, for example, Greene and Panofsky regularly participated, with a number of other émigré art historians, in a group that met to discuss art-philosophical problems, and Panofsky described his American colleague approvingly as "one of the few philosophers of art sufficiently interested in the historical phenomena to seek contact with art historians."³⁵⁷ The two men also paid tribute to each other in their publications of the late 30s and early 40s.³⁵⁸ Greene was also a leading figure in a group of Princeton scholars who sought to give definition to, and to demonstrate the importance and value of the humanistic disciplines. Their *Special Program in the Humanities* (SPH) was conceived of as, on the one hand, a counterbalance to the dominance of the 'sciences' within the American university, and on the other, as a response to those political and social developments in the wider world that were considered a threat to 'humanist' values.³⁵⁹ Panofsky knew and collaborated with Greene and the other members of this organisation in Princeton.³⁶⁰ The interdisciplinary, 'humanistic' concerns of these colleagues at the University tied in well with the new School for Humanistic Studies at the IAS, and provided a welcoming and encouraging environment for

³⁵⁷ Erwin Panofsky, 'Report on the Activities of the Institute for Advanced Study in the History of Art', April 15th 1941, in Wuttke, *Erwin Panofsky: Korrespondenz 1937 bis 1949*, 2003, pp287-293; p292. The other members of this discussion group were Paul Frankl, Hanns Swarzenski, Charles de Tolnay and Richard Bernheimer.

³⁵⁸ See, E. Panofsky, *Studies In Iconology*, pxvi; & T.M. Greene, *The Arts and the Art of Criticism*, 1940, p ix. For an interesting discussion of the relationship between the two men see, Craig Hugh Smyth, 'Thoughts on Erwin Panofsky's First Years in Princeton', in Lavin, *Meaning in the Visual Arts: Views From the Outside*, op. cit., p353-361.

³⁵⁹ For a discussion of the SPH and its rationale see, Wallace Irwin Jr., 'The Legacy of the SPH: How a Small Program in the Humanities Changed Princeton's Entire Curriculum', *Princeton Alumni Weekly*, January 14th, 1987, pp12-19.

³⁶⁰ Panofsky cites Francis R.B. Godolphin, and Albert M. Friend for their "helpful suggestions" in the preface to *Studies in Iconology* (p xvi). And in 1949 he was asked by Whitney J. Oates (Chairman of the SPH) to provide a lecture and forum for discussion for the SPH students (March 15th 1949, (AAA)).

Panofsky. The invitation to participate in Greene's 1938 symposium is indicative of these positive relations. Greene had invited established American scholars to provide their thoughts and views on 'The Meaning of the Humanities', and he himself provided the introduction and over-arching rationale to the eventual publication. As an émigré, Panofsky would have been grateful for the opportunity to broach publicly, and from such a thoroughly 'American' platform, the rationale for the history of art and the very idea of humanistic scholarship.

Panofsky's contribution, published as *The History of Art as a Humanistic Discipline*,³⁶¹ has been described, quite appropriately, as his "scholarly manifesto".³⁶² Although formulated within the genial atmosphere of Greene's Princeton symposium, this essay was Panofsky's response to the wider intellectual environment he had encountered in the United States. The émigré scholar gave considerable thought and effort to his presentation, and, indeed, it was with this essay that he really began to establish his 'American' persona.

Panofsky opens the essay with a definition of 'humanism'. The inveterate historian, Panofsky traces the development of the concept from the classical origins of the idea of *humanitas*, found in the writings of Cicero; through the Renaissance understanding of the human condition, epitomised in the thought of Marsilio Ficino, Pico and, especially, Erasmus; on to the spirit of the Enlightenment, personified in the towering figure of Immanuel Kant. Distilling the essence of this tradition Panofsky describes 'humanism' as,

...not so much a movement as an attitude which can be defined as the conviction of the dignity of man, based on both the insistence on human values (rationality and freedom) and the acceptance of human limitations (fallibility and frailty); from this two postulates result – responsibility and tolerance.³⁶³

Though the product of a historical synopsis, the significance of this definition of 'humanism', provided by a Jewish refugee from Nazi Germany, would surely have had a poignant resonance for Panofsky's audience in 1938.

From his introduction Panofsky moves adroitly on to his definition of 'the humanities'. From the humanist perspective, he points out, man is considered unique and worthy of study. A major part of this uniqueness lies in the fact that man creates cultural, 'symbolic' records,³⁶⁴ and from study of these records we can attempt to understand man. Panofsky notes that human, cultural records have

³⁶¹ E. Panofsky, 'The History of Art as a Humanistic Discipline' in *The Meaning of the Humanities*, 1938, pp91-118.

³⁶² J. A. Emmens, 'Erwin Panofsky as a Humanist', op. cit., p110.

³⁶³ *The History of Art as a Humanistic Discipline*, p92 (all subsequent references are to the original 1938 publication).

³⁶⁴ *Ibid*, p95.

“the quality of emerging from the stream of time”, and it is precisely in this respect, he notes, that they are studied by the humanist.³⁶⁵ For Panofsky, the humanist is therefore “fundamentally, an historian.”³⁶⁶

Though he does not mention him by name, Panofsky alludes here to Ernst Cassirer’s *Philosophy of Symbolic Forms*, and the philosophical understanding of *Kulturwissenschaft* expounded by his friend and former Hamburg colleague. The ‘humanities’ are defined as those subjects that deal with the ‘cultural’ world, in distinction to the natural sciences which deal with the ‘natural’ world:

[W]hile science endeavours to transform the chaotic variety of natural phenomena into what may be called a cosmos of nature, the humanities endeavour to transform the chaotic variety of human records into what may be called a cosmos of culture.³⁶⁷

Panofsky is also demarcating here, in a broader sense, that German ideal of *Wissenschaft* – an ‘all’ of human knowledge, encompassing both the humanistic disciplines and the natural sciences.

Panofsky has set up a basic and fundamental distinction between the humanities and the sciences in terms of their subject matter. However, before he proceeds to give further definition to the humanities in general, and to the history of art in particular, he takes time to point out “some very striking analogies between the methodical problems to be coped with by the scientist, on the one hand, and by the humanist, on the other.”³⁶⁸ Panofsky demonstrates how the procedural steps followed by both the scientist and the humanist – examination, interpretation and classification – were in many ways analogous; and, furthermore, that each step was, for both the scientist and the humanist, necessarily conditioned by an overarching relativity. When the scientist or the humanist selects their object of study, Panofsky notes, they both obey, “knowingly or not, a principle of pre-selection dictated by a theory in the case of the scientist and by a general historical conception in the case of the humanist.”³⁶⁹ Similarly, the interpretation of any object of study can only ever ‘make sense’ in relation to a wider theory, in the case of the scientist, or a “general historical conception”, in the case of the humanist.³⁷⁰ Finally, Panofsky points out, the classification of any object “obviously presupposes the idea of a whole to which the classes belong”; yet this ‘whole’ can only ever be constructed from the study of individual objects. As Panofsky admits,

However we may look at it, the beginning of our investigation always seems to presuppose the end, and the documents which should explain the monuments are

³⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, p96.

³⁶⁶ *Ibid.*

³⁶⁷ *Ibid.*

³⁶⁸ *Ibid.*

³⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, p96-7.

³⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, p99.

just as enigmatical as the monuments themselves...[I]ndividual monuments and documents can only be examined, interpreted and classified in light of a general historical concept, while at the same time this general historical concept can only be built up on individual monuments and documents; just as the understanding of natural phenomena and the use of scientific instruments depends on a general physical theory and vice versa.³⁷¹

Panofsky points out that although this hermeneutic problem might seem like “a hopeless vicious circle...Actually it is what the philosophers call an ‘organic situation’.”³⁷² Furthermore, he explains,

[T]his situation is by no means a permanent deadlock. Every discovery of an unknown historical fact, and every new interpretation of a known one, will either ‘fit in’ with the prevalent general conception, and thereby corroborate and enrich it, or else it will entail a subtle, or even a fundamental change in the prevalent general conception, and thereby throw new light on all that has been known before. In both cases the ‘system that makes sense’ operates as a consistent yet elastic organism...and what is true of the relationship between monuments, documents and a general historical conception in the humanities is evidently equally true of the relationship between phenomena, instruments and theory in the natural sciences.³⁷³

Panofsky is at pains to point out that the creation of both ‘humanistic’ *and* ‘scientific’ knowledge is always, to some extent, relative, temporal and theoretical. This was an integral part of that idealistic understanding of *Wissenschaft* that characterised German scholarship.³⁷⁴ The formation of any system of understanding was an on-going process, and it was the critical, self-reflective practitioner who recognised this fact. Panofsky wanted to emphasise that in the active creation of any system of understanding the hermeneutical bind between ‘facts’ and ‘theories’ had to be taken into account. Ultimately he was making the point to his American audience, however subtly, that the humanities should never hope to appropriate the supposed ‘objectivity’ – the ‘theory neutral’ or ‘matter-of-fact’ character – of scientific method, because such a positivistic notion of ‘science’ was itself a fallacy.

Only once he had covered this essential point did Panofsky go on to consider the history of art as a ‘humanistic’ discipline in more detail. “An art historian,” he asserts, “is a humanist whose ‘primary material’ consists of those records which have come down to us in the form of works of art.”³⁷⁵ This definition obviously then begged the question, “But what is a work of art?”³⁷⁶ After providing a short excursus on artistic “intention” and the balance of “form” and “content” that pertains to any

³⁷¹ Ibid, p100.

³⁷² Ibid. This was a term that Panofsky borrowed from T.M. Greene.

³⁷³ Ibid, p100-1.

³⁷⁴ In his discussion of these methodical problems Panofsky references the work of his one-time Hamburg student and friend, Edgar Wind. Ibid., p96, n.5.

³⁷⁵ Ibid., p101.

³⁷⁶ Ibid.

artwork,³⁷⁷ Panofsky defines a work of art as “a man-made object demanding to be experienced aesthetically.”³⁷⁸ It is from this definition that Panofsky moves on to the manner in which the procedures of the ‘humanist’ differ, on a fundamental level, from those of the ‘scientist:

The scientist, dealing as he does with natural phenomena, can at once proceed to analyse them. The humanist, dealing as he does with human actions and creations, has to engage in a mental process of a synthetic and subjective character...It is in fact by this very process that the real objects of the humanities come into being.³⁷⁹

Panofsky makes the point that the humanist is not primarily interested in their subject matter for its physical properties, but rather, in terms of its ‘meaning’. Thus, whereas the scientist can immediately treat their subject matter as an innately evidential ‘object’, the humanist has to actively re-experience their subject matter in order that it be constituted as an ‘object’ amenable to ‘humanistic’ analysis. As Panofsky writes,

For it is obvious that historians of philosophy or sculpture are concerned with books and statues not in so far as these books and sculptures exist materially, but in so far as they have a meaning. And it is equally obvious that this meaning can only be apprehended by reproducing, and thereby, quite literally, ‘realising,’ the thoughts that are expressed in the books and the artistic conceptions that manifest themselves in the statues.³⁸⁰

The process Panofsky refers to here is analogous to that immersive, individual experience of one’s source material that lay at the root of the process of *Bildung*.³⁸¹ As Panofsky indicates, this was an unavoidably subjective process; one that was necessarily conditioned by the singular ‘situated-ness’, or, to use the German term, *Weltanschauung*, of the individual. Panofsky thus poses the fundamental question,

How, then, is it possible to build up art-history as a respectable scholarly discipline, if its very objects come into being by an irrational and subjective process?³⁸²

His answer is that the *humanist* is conscious of this hermeneutical bind, and thus takes it into their historical account. In Panofsky’s definition, the *humanist* understands that,

The re-creative experience of a work of art depends...not only on the natural sensitivity and the visual training of the spectator, but also on his cultural

³⁷⁷ Ibid., p101-105.

³⁷⁸ Ibid., p105.

³⁷⁹ Ibid., p105-6.

³⁸⁰ Ibid.

³⁸¹ Panofsky actually uses the German word *Erlebnis* to emphasise the experiential and re-creative basis of humanistic practice. Ibid., p106, n.11.

³⁸² Ibid., p106.

equipment...He knows that his cultural equipment, such as it is, would not be in harmony with that of people in another land and of a different period.³⁸³

The responsible, disciplined, 'humanistic' historian employs historical methods in order to temper their innate subjectivity; in an attempt to understand that which is 'other', as much as is possible, on its own terms:

Not only will he collect and verify all the available information as to medium, condition, age, authorship, destination etc., but he will also compare the work with others of its class, and will examine such writings as reflect the aesthetic standards of its country and age...He will read old books on theology or mythology in order to identify its subject matter, and will further try to determine its historical locus...He will study the formal principles which control the rendering of the visible world...and thus build up a history of 'motifs'...And he will do his best to familiarize himself with the social, religious and philosophical attitudes of other periods and other countries, in order to correct his own subjective feeling for content. When he does all this, his aesthetic perception as such will change accordingly, and will more and more adapt itself to the original 'intention' of the works.³⁸⁴

Panofsky makes the point that the art-historical process is thus two-fold; comprising, on the one hand, the re-creative experience and, on the other, what he refers to as "archaeological research". Furthermore, these two processes were not to be thought of as sequential steps. Instead, they were interconnected so as to form what Panofsky again terms an "organic situation":

It is not true that the art historian first constitutes his object by means of re-creative synthesis and then begins his archaeological investigation - as though first buying a ticket and then boarding a train. In reality the two processes do not succeed each other, they interpenetrate; not only does the re-creative synthesis serve as a basis for the archaeological investigation, the archaeological investigation in turn serves as a basis for the re-creative process; both mutually qualify and rectify one another.³⁸⁵

This idea of the 'organic situation' is really the crux of Panofsky's "scholarly manifesto". It lies at the heart of the rationale he provides for the discipline of art history. The émigré scholar was pointing out to his American audience that the history of art could not be practiced as a purely 'empirical' or 'scientific' study of art 'objects'. But neither should the art historian be satisfied simply with their own subjective response to any object of study.³⁸⁶ It was the self-conscious reckoning with these *two*

³⁸³ Ibid., p108.

³⁸⁴ Ibid., p108-9.

³⁸⁵ Ibid., p107.

³⁸⁶ Panofsky includes a pointed barb for those who would proffer such an approach: "The humanist will look with suspicion upon what might be called 'appreciationism'. He who teaches innocent people to understand

aspects of the historical process, the 'objective' and the 'subjective', which distinguished the properly *humanistic* art historian.

[W]hat the art-historian...does, is not erect a rational superstructure on an irrational foundation, but to develop his re-creative experiences so as to conform with the results of his archaeological research, while continually checking the results of his archaeological research against the evidence of his re-creative experiences. Leonardo da Vinci has said: 'Two weaknesses leaning against one another add up to one strength.' The halves of an arch cannot even stand upright; the whole arch supports a weight. Similarly, archaeological research is blind and empty without aesthetic re-creation, and aesthetic re-creation is irrational and often misguided without archaeological research. But, 'leaning against one another', these two can support the 'system that makes sense,' that is, an historical synopsis.³⁸⁷

Ultimately, Panofsky is saying that what distinguished the history of art as a 'humanistic discipline' was the disciplined, *critical* attitude of its practitioners. The 'humanistic' art historian was self-conscious in regards to the exigencies of the historical process – they acted responsibly, and with a self-imposed discipline when confronting (and creating) their object of study. It was in this sense that the art historian's practice was *wissenschaftliche*, and it was in this sense that the history of art took its place among the other humanistic disciplines.³⁸⁸ This was Panofsky's translation, for his American audience, of *Kunstgeschichte als Kulturwissenschaft* into *The History of Art as a Humanistic Discipline*.

In the conclusion to this important English-language essay Panofsky felt compelled to return to the over-riding rationale for 'humanistic' study in general. In this sense too, Greene's symposium on 'The Meaning of the Humanities' was used by the émigré as a platform from which he could address the issues he had with the American intellectual environment. "It may be taken for granted that art-history deserves to be counted among the humanities," Panofsky wrote,

But what is the use of the humanities as such? Admittedly they are not practical, and admittedly they concern themselves with the past. Why, it may be asked, should we engage in impractical investigations, and why should we be interested in the past?³⁸⁹

In response he points out that "both the humanities and the natural sciences...have the impractical outlook of what the ancients called *vita contemplativa* as opposed to *vita activa*."³⁹⁰ "In fact", Panofsky claimed, "the two presuppose and demand each other":

art without bothering about classical languages, boring historical methods and dusty old documents, deprives naïveté of its charm without correcting its errors." *Ibid.*, p110.

³⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, p109-10.

³⁸⁸ Panofsky makes clear that much of what he writes in this essay relates, *mutatis mutandis*, to the other humanistic disciplines. See, for example, *Ibid.*, p109, n.13.

³⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, p114.

Science – here understood in the true sense of the term, namely as a serene and self-dependent pursuit of knowledge, not as something subservient to ‘practical’ ends – and the humanities are sisters.³⁹¹

Once again the German-born scholar sought to give expression to that idealistic vision of *wissenschaftliche* knowledge – extolled by the likes of Kant and Humboldt – in which all scholarship was, at root, research based, searching, progressive, independent and free from practical demand or utilitarian concern. In response to the American ‘democratic’ outlook, Panofsky was providing a distillation of his understanding of academic learning as *enlightenment*.

Though these were obviously the *Bildung* ideals that were ingrained in Panofsky’s intellectual *Weltanschauung* from his formative years, in America he gave them an even deeper historical lineage and significance. It was during the Renaissance, Panofsky pointed out in his scholarly manifesto, that the very idea of ‘the humanities’, i.e. in distinction to ‘the natural sciences’, first came into being. It was during the Renaissance, “that movement which has rightly been called the discovery...of both the world and man”, that man first positioned himself as a subject worthy of study.³⁹² It was in this sense that the humanities could be conceived of as a kind of self-knowledge - the means through which the human individual could inform and develop their own self-understanding. “The ideal aim of science,” Panofsky surmises, “would seem to be something like mastery, that of the humanities something like wisdom.”³⁹³ The émigré scholar brought his essay to a conclusion by quoting the Renaissance humanist Marsilio Ficino:

History is necessary, not only to make life agreeable, but also to endow it with moral significance. What is mortal in itself, achieves immortality through history; what is absent becomes present; old things are rejuvenated; and young men soon equal the maturity of old ones. If a man of seventy is considered wise because of his experience, how much wiser he whose life fills a span of a thousand or three thousand years! For indeed, a man may be said to have lived as many millennia as are embraced by the span of his knowledge of history.³⁹⁴

Ultimately, Panofsky was suggesting, the human individual (or, indeed, the ‘humanistic’ individual) informed and enlarged their own individual perspective through their understanding of history and their disciplined, ‘objective’ experience of cultural and historical ‘difference’.³⁹⁵ Thus was the *Bildung*

³⁹⁰ Ibid.

³⁹¹ Ibid., p117.

³⁹² Ibid., p117. For this historical lineage, see also p94-5

³⁹³ Ibid., p117.

³⁹⁴ Ibid, p117-18.

³⁹⁵ Ernst Cassirer expressed a similar sentiment in one of his first English-language publications: “History is not knowledge of external facts or events; it is a form of self-knowledge...By making us cognisant of the polymorphism of human existence it frees us from the freaks and prejudices of a special and single moment. It

tradition of the German *Aufklärung* writ large and related back, quite intentionally, to the *studia humanitatis* of the Renaissance.

Throughout *The History of Art as a Humanistic Discipline* Panofsky trod a measured path. There is no doubt that he was presenting a translation of his own 'German' understanding of academic scholarship to his American audience; but he did so in what was a very palatable form. Although he had delineated a kind of heuristic model for humanistic, historical practice, he left out much of the complex philosophical verbiage that would have typified such an undertaking in German scholarly writing. Panofsky understood that, in terms of the history of art at least, there was not the audience in America for such recondite, theoretical exposition, and so he made a real effort to write, as much as possible, in plain and comprehensible English. It should also be remembered that *The History of Art as a Humanistic Discipline* originated as a lecture, lasting little over one hour, and the printed version retains much of this spoken-word element.³⁹⁶ Panofsky wanted to communicate with his new audience without alienating them. It is understandable therefore, that he made a real effort to be as comprehensible and 'digestible' as possible. The longer historical lineage that Panofsky provided for 'the humanist tradition' can also be understood as part of this effort to make his presentation more 'palatable'. At pains not to stand out as a 'German' scholar preaching to his American audience, Panofsky presented himself instead as a representative of a much more historically rooted 'humanist tradition'; a tradition that would be more likely accepted by his American audience. In the effort to 'fit in' then, Panofsky was fostering a scholarly identity that emphasised his 'humanism' as opposed to his émigré status. It was this persona that Panofsky would continue to cultivate throughout his American career.

Studies in Iconology: Humanistic Themes in the Art of the Renaissance (1939)

Around the same time as he was formulating his presentation for T.M. Greene, Panofsky was engaged in the production of his first book-length American publication, *Studies in Iconology*. Eventually issued in 1939, the year after *The History of Art as a Humanistic Discipline* appeared, this work should also be understood as part of Panofsky's initial attempt to provide his American audience with an apology for the history of art as a legitimate academic discipline.

is this enrichment and enlargement, not the effacement, of the self, of our knowing and feeling ego, which is the aim of historical knowledge." *An Essay on Man*, op. cit., p191. This publication was a condensed, English language version of Cassirer's *Philosophie der symbolischen Formen*.

³⁹⁶ See, for example, *The History of Art as a Humanistic Discipline*, p115.

Studies in Iconology developed from the *Mary Flexner Lectures* delivered by Panofsky at Bryn Mawr College in 1937. This was a lecture commission with publication required, a common arrangement in American academia. Panofsky was asked to provide these lectures by the President of the institution, Marion Edwards Park.³⁹⁷ However, the real impetus behind the invitation had come from Bernard Flexner.³⁹⁸ Flexner had founded the *Mary Flexner Lectures* at Bryn Mawr in 1928, in honour of his sister, one of the first Jewish women to graduate from this college, and it is clear from Panofsky's correspondence that he was on friendly terms with both brother and sister in the late 1930s.³⁹⁹ Bernard and Mary were the younger siblings of Abraham Flexner, Director of the IAS, and it seems more than likely that Panofsky had established this fruitful connection through his 'boss' at the Institute. Bernard Flexner and Marion Edwards Park were also involved with the *Emergency Committee in Aid of Displaced Foreign Scholars*, and it is quite probable that Panofsky became acquainted with these figures in this capacity too. Thus, when Panofsky was cordially informed by Park that Bryn Mawr "would be very much pleased with a discussion of art from the humanistic point of view",⁴⁰⁰ he was provided once more with the opportunity to represent his understanding of the history of art in what was a welcoming and congenial setting.

Studies in Iconology is now most famous for the first section of its 'Introductory' in which Panofsky outlined his iconological 'method'. Indeed, due to its lasting influence this methodological statement has received a great deal of attention in the recent historiography. Panofsky himself stated that this 'Introductory' set out the revised content of a methodological article he had published in the periodical *Logos* in 1932.⁴⁰¹ However, this English language essay is often now disparaged as the poor relation to Panofsky's earlier 'theoretical' work.⁴⁰² Jaś Elsner and Katharina Lorenz have, only very recently, shed much light on the relationship between Panofsky's *Logos* essay and his 'Introductory' to *Studies in Iconology*.⁴⁰³ They too suggest that the English language publication is "a much safer, tamer, less daring piece," which evidences a "much more restrained and less exciting model of art history."⁴⁰⁴ Elsner and Lorenz seem to speak for many modern commentators when they describe the shift in content from Panofsky's German-language essay to *Studies in Iconology* as

³⁹⁷ Marion Edwards Park to Panofsky, March 24th, 1937 (620).

³⁹⁸ Marion Edwards Park to Mary and Bernard Flexner, November 23rd, 1937 (677) & Marion Edwards Park to Abraham Flexner, April 16th, 1937 (632).

³⁹⁹ See Panofsky to Abraham Flexner, July 8th, 1937 (704).

⁴⁰⁰ Marion Edwards Park to Panofsky, March 24th, 1937 (620).

⁴⁰¹ *Studies in Iconology*, pxiv. Panofsky was referring to his *Zum Problem der Beschreibung und Inhaltsdeutung*, op. cit.

⁴⁰² Carl Landauer, describes Panofsky's Introductory as "tame, one might even say, intellectually timid." *The Survival of Antiquity*, op. cit., p225-6.

⁴⁰³ See, *The Genesis of Iconology*, op. cit. In this publication Elsner and Lorenz also provide a translation of Panofsky's *Logos* article: 'On the Problem of Describing and Interpreting Works of the Visual Arts', see note 57.

⁴⁰⁴ *The Genesis of Iconology*, *ibid.*, p498.

“a dumbing down from propositional argument to didactic pragmatism”; and they conclude, “It is the loss of vision and intellectual ambition...which makes the contrast (for a modern reader) of the 1932 and 1939 essays so depressing.”⁴⁰⁵ As has been noted, these condemnations of the ‘American’ Panofsky have become commonplace. However, such criticisms are often levelled with little effort made to understand what Panofsky was trying to do in America, and the particular circumstances in which he was working.

Studies in Iconology was an attempt to introduce a largely nescient American audience to the history of art as a history of ‘meaning’. This was the approach that had prevailed in the environs of the *KBW*, where it was proffered as a response to the strict formalism of, for example, Heinrich Wölfflin.⁴⁰⁶ Panofsky’s iconological method sought to deal with the work of art, in the more fully *humanistic* sense outlined in his earlier “scholarly manifesto”, as a manifestation of human ‘content’. In his ‘Introductory’ Panofsky broke down the iconological approach into three stages. He distinguished three levels of meaning to be elicited from a work of art, and he then delineated the interpretive strategies through which the art historian could elicit these levels of meaning. Panofsky then described the ‘objective correctives’ which would temper the subjective nature of any such interpretations. Famously, these ‘procedural steps’ were set out by Panofsky in tabular form.⁴⁰⁷

Panofsky’s first level of interpretation was concerned with what he described as “primary or natural subject matter”. This involved the observer identifying the lines, volumes, colours etc. in an artwork as physical objects – people, animals, buildings, tools etc.⁴⁰⁸ Such “pre-iconographical description” was based upon the observer’s practical experience; their “familiarity with objects and events.”⁴⁰⁹ The controlling principle for this level of interpretation was an understanding of the history of style, or an “insight into the manner in which, under varying historical conditions, objects and events were expressed by forms.”⁴¹⁰

Panofsky’s second level of interpretation dealt with “secondary or conventional subject matter.” This was the level at which the art historian understood the objects, people and events depicted as representations of scenes, stories or allegories. Where knowledge for this “iconographical analysis in

⁴⁰⁵ Ibid., p511 & p502 respectively.

⁴⁰⁶ Panofsky’s ‘re-presentation’ of Warburg’s legacy is subjected to significant critical censure in the recent historiography. See, for example, M. Iversen, *Retrieving Warburg’s Tradition*, *op. cit.*; R. Woodfield, *Warburg’s Method*, *op. cit.*; G. Didi-Huberman, *Artistic Survival: Panofsky vs. Warburg*, *op. cit.*

⁴⁰⁷ *Studies in Iconology*, p14-15.

⁴⁰⁸ It is evident from the subtitle of *Studies in Iconology* (i.e. *Humanistic Themes in the Art of the Renaissance*) that Panofsky’s methodology was specifically intended to deal with representational art in general, and the art of the Renaissance in particular.

⁴⁰⁹ *Studies in Iconology*, p15.

⁴¹⁰ Ibid.

the narrower sense of the word” was lacking the art historian had to consult literary sources and contextual documentation. Accordingly, the controlling principle for this level of interpretation was an “insight into the manner in which, under varying historical conditions, specific themes or concepts were expressed by objects and events.”⁴¹¹

Panofsky’s third level of interpretation was concerned with what he referred to as “intrinsic meaning” or “content”. This “iconographical interpretation in a deeper sense” involved interpreting the work of an individual artist as a symptom of a wider worldview or *Weltanschauung*. For Panofsky, this “intrinsic meaning” was “apprehended by ascertaining those underlying principles which reveal the basic attitude of a nation, a period, a class, a religious or philosophical persuasion – unconsciously qualified by one personality and condensed into one work.”⁴¹² This level of interpretation depended upon what Panofsky referred to as the “synthetic intuition” of the individual interpreter, and it was to be conditioned by an “insight into the manner in which, under varying historical conditions, essential tendencies of the human mind were expressed by specific themes and concepts.”⁴¹³

With this iconological methodology Panofsky had, in some respects, provided his practical-minded American audience with a functional and utilitarian ‘how-to-do’ art history. At the level of “iconographical analysis in the narrower sense”, for example, the art historian was to consult books and historical sources (those “dusty old documents” Panofsky had referred to in *The History of Art as a Humanistic Discipline*) in order to identify the subject matter and themes represented in Renaissance painting. This was a realm of empirical, ‘positivist’ art-historical identification, in which some degree of certainty or ‘factuality’ could be achieved, so long as the practitioner exercised the requisite level of work and historical diligence.⁴¹⁴ This was certainly how an eager American studentship implemented Panofsky’s ‘method’. The decoding of representational painting through recourse to contextual documentation was widely and enthusiastically embraced as a fruitful methodology which in itself provided the history of art with a certain disciplinary rationalisation. As Irving Lavin, a student of Panofsky in the 1950s, recalls,

The cri de guerre was iconography...a distinctive methodology that Erwin Panofsky raised to the level of a humanistic discipline in its own right – above all through his uncanny ability to ‘explain’ the content of works of art by reference to a wide variety of evidence from other fields. Art was thus no longer viewed as a *rara avis* aloft in the rarefied atmosphere of elitist aesthetics but as an integral part of our cultural

⁴¹¹ Ibid.

⁴¹² Ibid., p7.

⁴¹³ Ibid., p15.

⁴¹⁴ Ibid, p11.

heritage, accessible to anyone with the requisite imagination, intelligence and persistence.⁴¹⁵

As Lavin indicates, iconography “in the narrower sense” – a kind of historical archaeology and identification of ‘meaning’ – segued smoothly with the positivist, ‘democratic’ intellectual outlook in America.

However, this was only one aspect of the interpretive process as outlined by Panofsky in *Studies in Iconology*. The interpretation of “intrinsic meaning” or “content” – the subject of what Panofsky referred to in 1939 as “iconographical interpretation in a deeper sense” – was a much more expansive undertaking and could not be carried out in a ‘positivistic’ spirit of factual determinacy. At this interpretive ‘stage’ the art historian could not hope to adduce an essentially correlative text which would explicate, with a degree of evidential certainty, the *intrinsic meaning* of an artwork.⁴¹⁶ Understanding the artwork as an index of a wider general historical conception was a far more subjective and speculative undertaking. As such, Panofsky was keen to point out that the “synthetic intuition” required at this stage was especially conditioned by “the interpreter’s psychology and ‘Weltanschauung’.”⁴¹⁷ At this stage of interpretation, Panofsky noted, the properly historical (or ‘humanistic’) art historian was compelled to,

...check what he thinks is the intrinsic meaning of the work, or group of works, to which he devotes his attention, against what he thinks is the intrinsic meaning of as many other documents of civilisation historically related to that work or group of works, as he can master.⁴¹⁸

“Iconographical interpretation in the deeper sense” was dependent upon the broader historical understanding of the individual interpreter, and any insight into “intrinsic meaning” was conditional and contextually placed. Just as Panofsky had demonstrated in *The History of Art as a Humanistic Discipline*, the process of art-historical interpretation was hermeneutical in nature; it was by definition contingent, provisional and ‘theoretical’.

From a close reading of Panofsky’s ‘Introductory’ it is clear that he considered this third interpretive level crucial. Indeed, he makes clear that the other two ‘levels’ were geared towards the explication of this third ‘strata’ of meaning. It was with “Iconographical interpretation in the deeper sense” that the art historian became involved with studying the artwork in a ‘symbolic’ sense, as an object that could provide an insight into what Panofsky called “the general and essential tendencies of the

⁴¹⁵ Lavin, *Theory in My Time*, op. cit., p13.

⁴¹⁶ *Studies in Iconology*, p14.

⁴¹⁷ *Ibid*, p15.

⁴¹⁸ *Ibid*, p16.

human mind.”⁴¹⁹ It was at this level of interpretation that the history of art became a *humanistic* discipline.⁴²⁰ Citing Ernst Cassirer by name, Panofsky made the point that it was as a *humanist* that the art historian attempted to understand his object of study in relation to the wider sphere of human culture and human development in general.⁴²¹

As in *The History of Art as a Humanistic Discipline*, Panofsky was keen to demonstrate that the historian of art could not simply content themselves with the more ‘factual’ knowledge that was garnered from “iconographical analysis in the narrower sense of the word”. Indeed, although he delineated three stages of interpretation, demarcating them in his tripartite ‘table’, Panofsky also took great care to point out that “in actual work, the methods of approach which here appear as three unrelated operations of research merge with one another into one organic and indivisible process.”⁴²² Panofsky was emphasising that the more empirical iconographical *identification* was not, in itself, sufficient. As a properly *humanistic* discipline, the history of art had to be acknowledged, at root, as an interpretive and speculative pursuit. Once again, he pointed out that it was the critical individual who would understand the subjective and theoretical nature of the art-historical process; it was the responsible practitioner who recognised the need for historical discipline and who thus approached the process of art-historical interpretation in the requisite ‘humanistic’ spirit.

There is no doubt that, in comparison to his 1932 essay, Panofsky’s ‘Introductory’ to *Studies in Iconology* was ‘theory-light’. However, the 1939 publication was issued in a markedly different intellectual environment, and was intended for a significantly different audience. Panofsky’s *Logos* essay originated as a lecture given to professional philosophers at a meeting of the Kant Society in Kiel. Using the recondite language typical of German scholarly discourse at this time Panofsky provided a detailed and complex conceptual argument to demonstrate the significance of art history for philosophical understanding. *Studies in Iconology*, on the other hand, was a publication that developed from a lecture series delivered to an audience of American undergraduate students and members of the general public.⁴²³ Panofsky was well aware that American audiences, used to presentations on art being delivered in the ‘appreciationism’ mould, would not be particularly prepared for, nor predisposed to a historical or ‘philosophical’ approach.⁴²⁴ When the German scholar was first informed that he should expect a ‘general’ audience at Bryn Mawr, for example, he admitted that his main problem would be choosing a subject, “equally suitable for a larger audience

⁴¹⁹ Ibid.

⁴²⁰ Ibid, p16.

⁴²¹ Ibid, p8 & p16.

⁴²² Ibid, p17.

⁴²³ Marion Edwards Park to Panofsky, March 24th, 1937 (620).

⁴²⁴ Panofsky referred wryly his “youthful sins in quasi-philosophical fields” at this time. Panofsky to Abraham Flexner, March 30th, 1937 (625).

and for a publication in what seems to be a highly scholarly series.”⁴²⁵ He was conscious that he would have to provide his representation of *Kunstwissenschaft* in as digestible and palatable a manner as possible. Panofsky would certainly have had any such reservations confirmed when he told Marion Edwards Park he would lecture on ‘Problems of Secular Iconography in the Renaissance’. The President of Bryn Mawr, while assuring Panofsky that the subject interested her personally very much, wondered, “...whether as the lectures are open to the public it might be possible for you to suggest a general title which, though equally correct, might be somewhat less technical.”⁴²⁶ Panofsky was thus aware from the outset that he would have to adapt his presentation in order to engage his American addressees; and he also recognised that this would entail a great deal of effort. As he informed Abraham Flexner, “to give a good popular lecture is perhaps the most difficult thing in the world.”⁴²⁷

In *Studies in Iconology* Panofsky pared back elements he thought would not be particularly well received by an American audience. It is significant, for example, that he did not actually use the term ‘Iconology’ at any point in his 1939 publication – a peculiar point of fact for a book entitled *Studies in Iconology*. Panofsky did use this specific term later in his American career. However, in 1939 the important third ‘stage’ of interpretation was instead referred to as ‘iconographical interpretation in a deeper sense’. Even though he considered this ‘stage’ crucial to any conception of art history as a humanistic discipline, it would seem Panofsky was concerned that the theoretical connotations of ‘Iconology’ would be too galling for his American audience. The émigré academic in effect downplayed the more speculative implications of his methodology by tethering the ‘interpretive’ level to the more ‘factual’ and ‘empirical’ “iconography in a narrower sense”.

Panofsky also desisted from providing too technical an exposition in his ‘Introductory’ to *Studies in Iconology*. Compared to the *Logos* essay the recondite philosophical verbiage has been toned down substantially, and Panofsky delineates his method in plain terms, and in straightforward English, as far as possible.⁴²⁸ Rather than presenting an abstract theoretical treatise, in his American publication Panofsky uses many pictorial examples to explicate his method-in-action. He obviously believed his ‘method’ would be more comprehensible, more ‘digestible’, if demonstrated through working example. Indeed, due to the critical attention focussed upon the opening ‘methodological’ section of *Studies in Iconology*, it is often overlooked that this ‘Introductory’ comprises only a small fraction of the whole undertaking. In the five subsequent chapters of *Studies in Iconology* Panofsky sets out to

⁴²⁵ Panofsky to Marion Edwards Park, March 27th, 1937 (622).

⁴²⁶ Marion Edwards Park to Panofsky, April 16th, 1937 (633).

⁴²⁷ Panofsky to Abraham Flexner, January 19th, 1939 (746).

⁴²⁸ Elsner and Lorenz make this point in *The Genesis of Iconology*, op. cit., p494.

demonstrate his 'method' in action. It is clear that he considered this a more effective way to communicate with his American audience.⁴²⁹

Furthermore, in *Studies in Iconology* Panofsky made a concerted effort to cultivate a 'popular' feel in terms of his chosen subject matter. Chapters on 'Father Time' and 'Blind Cupid', for example, focus intentionally upon popular imagery that would have been recognisable to most Americans from "Valentines and New Year's cards, as well as...comic cartoons and serious advertisements."⁴³⁰ By tracing the iconographical lineage of such familiar pictorial themes Panofsky hoped to communicate the significance and the pertinence of his methodology for his American audience.⁴³¹ Once again, the émigré scholar was keen to relate to his American audience, and to engage them with his vision of the history of art.⁴³²

In preparing his first major English-language publication Panofsky was extremely self-conscious in terms of his mode of address. As has been shown, he did not want to appear conspicuous, or to 'stand out' as the purveyor of a decidedly 'foreign' approach to art scholarship. As such, his writing style, and his use of English, was something to which Panofsky devoted a great deal of time and thought. Panofsky assured his 'boss' at the IAS, Abraham Flexner, that the text of *Studies in Iconology* would be proofread by a number of people before it progressed to publication. The émigré scholar then proceeded to give fuller expression to his concerns:

*"A really serious problem is, of course, that of my English as such. I am absolutely certain that all my friends and collaborators will not be able to purge my style from a certain 'foreign' and perhaps basically un-English flavour. But the other alternative would have been to write the whole thing in German and to have it translated by an American scholar. And this, it seems to me and to several friends with whom I have discussed the question on principle, would have been even worse. Translations, even if 'correct' from a purely factual point of view, always change the meaning, however subtly, and either destroy the personal character of the original altogether or replace it by a different one."*⁴³³

After writing at some length of these concerns, Panofsky concluded his letter to Flexner with the apology,

⁴²⁹ Taken together, the six sections of *Studies in Iconology* correlate to the six lectures Panofsky delivered at Bryn Mawr in 1937.

⁴³⁰ *Studies in Iconology*, p71.

⁴³¹ Even before Panofsky received the invite to Bryn Mawr he had written to the *New York Times*, to inquire about a particular advert featuring Father Time. (February 18th, 1937 (614)).

⁴³² Such use of popular imagery was not much of a departure for someone so well acquainted with Aby Warburg's brand of *Bildwissenschaft*. For further discussion of this point, see H. Bredekamp, 'A Neglected Tradition? Art History as *Bildwissenschaft*', *Critical Inquiry*, 29:3, spring 2003, pp 418-428.

⁴³³ Panofsky to Abraham Flexner, July 16th, 1938 (707).

*“Please forgive my loquaciousness. But the problem of English has worried me, and keeps worrying me, a good deal. To a physicist or to a mathematician it does not matter so much as to a humanist, who finds himself in a real quandary. With him the stylistic formulation is an integral part of the meaning he tries to convey. Consequently, when he writes himself in a language other than his own, he will hurt his reader’s ear by unfamiliar words, rhythms and constructions; when he has his text translated, he will address his audience wearing a wig and a false nose.”*⁴³⁴

As a humanist scholar, possessing a deep understanding of language and philology, Panofsky well understood that the German and English languages were by no means correlative, with direct equivalences or correspondences between words and concepts. He thus made considerable effort to become fluent in English. As Horst Janson has pointed out,

Unlike many others [among the émigré scholars] Panofsky realised from the very start that from now on he would have to conceive his ideas in English, rather than merely translate them from the German; and that this required, beyond a full command of vocabulary, grammar and syntax, an intuitive grasp of the flavour of the language, its subtleties of metaphor and rhythm.⁴³⁵

Although Panofsky had already demonstrated considerable facility with the English language he was keen to eradicate any hint of a foreign accent in his American publications. He was determined that his use of English would not provide any kind of obstacle or impediment in his effort to engage his American audience. Accordingly, Panofsky worked hard in *Studies in Iconology* to purge any remaining ‘Germanisms’ from his writing, enlisting his close friend Margaret Barr to help him revise and edit his lecture scripts for publication.⁴³⁶

This was actually a practice that Panofsky continued right throughout his American career. It is a point of fact that each one of Panofsky’s major American publications developed from a lecture series, and his lecture scripts always formed the basis of the subsequently published texts. Panofsky would create a draft from his lecture transcripts and he would then have this draft subjected to stylistic criticism by an American-born English speaker.⁴³⁷ Roxanne Heckscher, Panofsky’s long-term secretary in the nineteen-fifties and sixties, provides some insight into how this process developed.⁴³⁸ She recounts how Panofsky would work on his lecture scripts at home in the evenings,

⁴³⁴ Ibid.

⁴³⁵ Janson, *Erwin Panofsky. Obituary*, op. cit., p157.

⁴³⁶ Panofsky to Margaret Barr, October 6th, 1937 (667). Panofsky thanks Barr in the preface for “her most helpful participation in the wording of the English text.” *Studies in Iconology*, p vi (Panofsky refers to Barr as Miss Scolari, her maiden name).

⁴³⁷ In the Prefaces to those publications that originated as a lecture series, Panofsky provides thanks to whoever had helped in the revision of that particular text.

⁴³⁸ *A Secretary’s Recollections* op. cit., Roxanne Sanossian would become Roxanne Heckscher when she married Panofsky’s close friend and former Hamburg student William Heckscher.

preparing a longhand draft which he would then dictate aloud the next morning. Heckscher describes how, after this initial reading, Panofsky would then encourage her to “tear him apart” in terms of grammar, syntax and any other ‘Germanicisms’ that remained in his delivery.⁴³⁹ Heckscher points out that Panofsky was not at all stubborn or proud in this regard. Indeed, she notes that although he would argue when he felt it was warranted, the German émigré actually encouraged and welcomed criticism of his use of English. He was obviously keen that his English language delivery be as fluent and natural as possible.

Heckscher also makes the salient point that Panofsky was quite happy she was not a specialist in art history. In the editing process enacted with a native English speaker, the émigré scholar was not looking for criticism of the content, but rather the ‘style’ and delivery of his work. As Heckscher points out, “He wanted (his writing) to make sense to the intelligent, educated layman who was not an art historian.”⁴⁴⁰ Panofsky obviously wanted to reach as wide an audience as possible. He was intent on providing an open, digestible introduction to the history of art, and he worked hard to make his presentations intelligible and accessible. In order to relate to his American addressees Panofsky made a real effort to ‘sound’ American. It is interesting that in 1993 Roxanne Heckscher would look back and remember that the way Panofsky used English “reminded me of the way I would think Henry James would talk.”⁴⁴¹ As early as 1934, Margaret Barr, Panofsky’s American confidante in the formative years of his migration, and the English-language ‘editor’ of *Studies in Iconology*, had suggested that he read Henry James to aid his acculturation. It would seem the émigré scholar took this advice to heart, and it is not implausible that the style of this noted American writer made a significant, lasting impression.⁴⁴²

Panofsky’s process of developing lecture scripts into publishable text helps to explain the now-famously familiar and conversational tone of his American texts. In a twofold sense, each one of Panofsky’s major American works developed from a spoken-word performance. They were delivered vocally not just in the lecture theatre, but also in the process of dictation and revision that saw them moulded into publications. Heckscher points out that this oral presentation was actually an essential part of Panofsky’s process.⁴⁴³ He could, of course, have given his secretaries hand-written scripts to

⁴³⁹ Heckscher notes of Panofsky’s writing, “there was a certain German construction in his sentences....(V)erbs would come all the way at the end.” She also mentions that she would often move Panofsky’s verbs and split his longer sentences into three. Ibid.

⁴⁴⁰ Ibid.

⁴⁴¹ Ibid.

⁴⁴² Panofsky wrote to Barr, “I am very grateful to you for having introduced me to H.J.; I have started to read ‘Daisy Miller’ and like it very much; it is a little similar to certain novels by Fontane, who is a favourite author of mine.” December 27th, 1934 (510).

⁴⁴³ *A Secretary’s Recollections*, op. cit.

edit and type, but it is clear that he attached particular significance to their vocal delivery. Without the original lecture transcripts it is difficult to determine the precise relation between a finished text and the original oral presentation. However, Panofsky's written publications all retain in their final form an unmistakable spoken-word element. In *Studies in Iconology*, for example, Panofsky often heralds the explication of an iconographical point of detail with a precursory, "Of course..."⁴⁴⁴ or "As everybody knows..."⁴⁴⁵ Similarly, the author will move from one point to another, assuring the reader, "Thus we can easily understand..."⁴⁴⁶ At each turn Panofsky endeavours to carry his reader (or listener) along with him in the demonstration and explication of his scholarship; informing them, for example, that "Thus it is in the iconography of Kronos-Saturn rather than in that of Time proper that we shall have to look for supplementary evidence."⁴⁴⁷ The book is littered with such instances where the author includes his reader with a conspiratorial "we". The émigré scholar thus involves and embroils his reader in the process of iconographical exposition and discovery. By preserving the immediacy of his spoken word delivery, Panofsky cultivated in his written texts a familiarity and an intimacy intended to engage his reader, even as he presents an approach to art that was essentially 'foreign'.⁴⁴⁸

During the period that Panofsky worked on *Studies in Iconology* he met and befriended the noted American author Booth Tarkington.⁴⁴⁹ The Panofskys would often escape the heat of the Princeton summer by travelling to Kennebunkport in Maine. On these regular vacations Panofsky would join Tarkington on long summer afternoons at 'The Floats', a boathouse in which the American author habitually sojourned, for 'coffee and conversation.' Panofsky certainly valued Tarkington's opinion, and when he was working on *Studies in Iconology* he often wrote to this American friend of his concerns with regard to his use of English.⁴⁵⁰ Tarkington, in response, provided Panofsky with considerable encouragement. He also provided a perceptive criticism of Panofsky's writing 'style'. Having read *Studies in Iconology*, for example, Tarkington informed Panofsky,

⁴⁴⁴ For example, *Studies in Iconology*, p87, p95, p98

⁴⁴⁵ Ibid, p79.

⁴⁴⁶ Ibid, p120

⁴⁴⁷ Ibid, p75.

⁴⁴⁸ Roxanne Heckscher notes that whereas "other scholars would agonise over draft upon draft", Panofsky would dictate his first draft once; this would be subject to Heckscher's immediate criticism and then re-typed in final draft. *A Secretary's Recollections*, op. cit.

⁴⁴⁹ See Richard Ludwig: *Dr Panofsky and Mr Tarkington: An Exchange of Letters, 1938-1946*, 1974. See also, E. Panofsky, *Humanitas Tarkingtoniana*, in 'An Exhibition of Booth Tarkington's Works in the Treasure Room of the Princeton University Library. March-April', 1946, pp1-4.

⁴⁵⁰ Panofsky to Tarkington, October 20th, 1939 (777).

“...your mastery of expression dumbfounds us again – it has often done so – and the ‘printed word’ proves itself to be your own because it carries the sound of your very voice.”⁴⁵¹

After a further reading Tarkington wrote to Panofsky,

“There is a charm in the book that comes so natively from you that you may be unaware of it. This; that although your reader may continually be conscious of his little learning, and thus take some shame at a misspent youth, he always feels that you overlook it and deal gently with him, courteously treating him as if he knew already much of what you tell him – which he doesn’t!”⁴⁵²

Panofsky was deeply grateful for the encouragement he received from his Pulitzer prize-winning friend.⁴⁵³ He also appreciated Tarkington’s astute characterisation of his English ‘style’. Panofsky had developed an emollient approach in his engagement with his American audience, and it was his success in this regard that determined, to a great extent, the popularity of his English language scholarship.

There is no doubting the level of learning on display in *Studies in Iconology*. Panofsky had provided a largely nescient American audience with an introduction to the history of art as a meaningful historical discipline. The book is effectively a translation of years of detailed, serious scholarly research and immense erudition; but Panofsky presents it in an entirely digestible manner, without alienating an audience unaccustomed to such an approach to art. He enacts a fine balance in his presentation, managing not to come across as supercilious, while at the same time avoiding the potential pitfall of condescension.⁴⁵⁴ Ultimately the émigré scholar managed to engage his new audience by making the content of his work seem, somehow, all so reassuringly familiar.

With *Studies in Iconology* Panofsky had begun to develop what would become his characteristic English language style. He is now famous for his entirely ‘fluent’ and ‘natural’ English-language prose.⁴⁵⁵ However, this mellifluous style should not mask the fact that Panofsky’s “lovely English”⁴⁵⁶ was actually the product of a sustained and determined effort. The idea that the German scholar arrived in America and quite effortlessly developed an easy facility with the English language is a long way short of the truth.⁴⁵⁷ Panofsky’s apparently easy facility with a foreign language was the

⁴⁵¹ Tarkington to Panofsky, September 5th, 1939 (766).

⁴⁵² Tarkington to Panofsky, October 15th, 1939 (776).

⁴⁵³ Panofsky to Tarkington, October 20th, 1939 (777).

⁴⁵⁴ Roxanne Heckscher notes that Panofsky “...never talked down to people. It was almost as if he conferred upon you, very often, an intelligence that you may not even have had.” *A Secretary’s Recollections*, op. cit.

⁴⁵⁵ See, for example, R.W. Lee, *Erwin Panofsky. Obituary*, op. cit., p368.

⁴⁵⁶ D. Summers, *Meaning in the Visual Arts as a Humanistic Discipline*, op. cit., p9.

⁴⁵⁷ Elsner and Lorenz describe this idea as, “pious bunkum.” *The Genesis of Iconology*, op. cit., p498, n.34.

result of purposeful hard work. Ultimately such effort speaks of Panofsky's commitment to forging a new life and career in the United States of America.

Reaction

There can be no doubt that by the beginning of the nineteen-forties the influence of the émigré art historians was becoming increasingly perceptible within the American university. Walter Friedländer, Karl Lehmann, Richard Ettinghausen, Julius Held, Alfred Salmony and Guido Schönberger all held positions within the Institute of Fine Arts (IFA) at NYU, a testament to the incredible fund-raising work of Walter Cook. In addition, Wilhelm Köhler had a professorship at Harvard and Kurt Weitzmann one at Princeton; Richard Krautheimer and Wolfgang Stechow taught at Vassar and Oberlin respectively, and Paul Frankl was firmly ensconced at the IAS. As much as he may have wanted to avoid it, Panofsky was undoubtedly identified as a figurehead for these developments.

Panofsky himself was elected to the Board of Directors of the College Art Association (CAA) in 1940.⁴⁵⁸ He took his place there alongside American scholars such as Walter Cook, Charles Rufus Morey, Alfred Barr, Paul Sachs and the President of the CAA Sumner McKnight Crosby. These were men who were open and amenable to the influence of *Kunstwissenschaft*, and Panofsky had known each of them since the early thirties. Also on the Board of the CAA at this time were Millard Meiss, Rensselaer Lee, Meyer Schapiro and George Kubler – former students who Panofsky had known personally since his earliest years in America. Up until the 1940s the CAA had been a rather heterogeneous association of practicing artists, art dealers, teachers, connoisseurs and such like. The new Board of Directors was keen to establish the Association as a more rigorously professional body of scholars devoted to the historical study of art. As such they endeavoured to provide a more coherent definition, rationale and justification for their subject area within the American University. In 1944 a detailed statement was composed to this end, and sent out to the faculties of every Liberal Arts College in America. It was also published in the *College Art Journal*, the newly founded official publication of the organisation.⁴⁵⁹ This 'Statement on the Place of the History of Art in the Liberal Arts Curriculum' noted that,

The attitude towards art in many university circles is still compounded of traditional views which long ago have been abandoned: [that] art merely decorates or sweetens life, and it may therefore be added to the diet of the college student only

⁴⁵⁸ Panofsky to Rensselaer Lee, September 26th, 1940 (805).

⁴⁵⁹ 'Statement on the Place of the History of Art in the Liberal Arts Curriculum', *College Art Journal*, 3:3, 1944, pp82-87. The *College Art Journal* replaced *Parnassus* as the official publication of the CAA in 1944.

after he has assimilated the 'solid' courses in science, literature or philosophy, that art is a frill, a dessert.⁴⁶⁰

In opposition to this view the CAA statement declared,

The history of art is no less fundamental to liberal education than any other field of the humanities...To regard the history of art in the liberal arts college as secondary, ornamental, a luxury to be indulged if surplus funds are at hand, is a relic of outworn notions of culture...Courses in the 'appreciation of art' or 'the principles of design' may succeed in developing perception, but unless the insight of the student is enlarged and deepened by historical knowledge, such courses must be regarded as essentially introductory and therefore limited...[How] can one perceive the qualities of form and meaning in a medieval painting without a knowledge of the artistic and religious conventions of the period?...Non-historical study implies a denial of richness and content in works of art...The teaching of art without knowledge of its historical context tends to be indoctrination and rationalisation of the preferences of the teacher. Art historians themselves are also influenced by contemporary art and taste and the contemporary world. But through historical study of the work and the conditions of its production and acceptance, through acquisition of knowledge and the cultivation of a sympathetic imagination, they attempt to surmount the barriers of subjective vision.⁴⁶¹

Panofsky's influence and guidance are manifest in this statement. The conceptual framework and even some of the terminology mirrors that in *The History of Art as a Humanistic Discipline* and *Studies in Iconology*. Panofsky had established an enclave of support among like-minded American scholars and he was able to exert a pervasive influence, from behind the scenes.⁴⁶² Panofsky himself never filled any of the prominent titled positions within the CAA. He remained extremely conscious of his *émigré* status, and was keen not to appear too conspicuous in America. Nonetheless, it was clear that he was considered a leading light in the development of American art history.

Just as he was the most prominent figure among the refugee art historians, so too did Panofsky become a figurehead for those within the American environment who remained deeply opposed to any 'Teutonic' influence. In 1943 Panofsky's oldest friend, the *émigré* art historian Walter Friedländer, drew his attention to an article published in *The New York Times* by the paper's noted art critic, Howard Devree. Under the pretext of a review of an exhibition held at the Metropolitan Museum of Art, Devree launched an explicit and pointed attack on Panofsky's 'brand' of scholarship:

⁴⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, p83.

⁴⁶¹ *Ibid.*, p84-7.

⁴⁶² Sumner McK. Crosby, President of the CAA, had previously consulted Panofsky for advice on the wording and construction of the founding statements of the rejuvenated organisation. Sumner McK. Crosby to Panofsky, April 8th, 1941 (820) & May 29th, 1941 (829). Millard Meiss, a former student who had become Chairman of the CAA, would also regularly consult Panofsky for guidance and advice in regards to the publications and direction of the *Association*; as would Rens Lee, editor in chief of *The Art Bulletin*.

The other day in a bookshop I picked up a volume on iconology which devoted a whole long heavy chapter to the use and significance of the blind cherub in certain Renaissance paintings! One could not but feel that – useful as such dissertations may be from certain historical angles – pedantic scholarship has laid particularly heavy mortmain on general and simple direct appreciation of art, imbuing all but the initiate with a sense of ignorance and unworthiness and erecting a wall of erudition between the ordinary citizen and the pretorian guard of Germanic art specialists.⁴⁶³

Devree here gave vent to all the negative stereotypes associated with German art scholarship. Panofsky's work was denigrated for being over-determined, sophistic and supercilious in nature. In the mould of a C.E. Norton, Devree was disparaging of such 'Teutonic' influence. The implication was that German art scholarship in general, and Panofsky's iconology in particular, was somehow 'un-democratic' and, in contrast to 'appreciationism', an unwelcome and *un-American* imposition. This was a heady public attack on German influence made at the height of the Second World War. As Devree continued his jingoistic bombast,

Unless Allied bombers have done their work better than we know, shelves and shelves of such doctorate theses remain in the Rhineland and beyond to frighten the average man away from a simple and direct response to beauty, unhampered by the appalling knowledge that one does not know the exact and involved ramifications and symbolisms of works of art – whose authors in many cases would have been profoundly surprised by the interpretations piled weightily upon them. Perhaps some similar treatise explains the wild geese flying in a Sieneese painting; but I do not want to think they mean the spirit of man flying out of the dark of the Middle Ages into the blinding light of the Renaissance. They are beautiful by themselves.⁴⁶⁴

To have such a crass, caricatural reference to his work published in such a conspicuous newspaper must have been extremely disconcerting for Panofsky. It would have made him even more acutely self-conscious of his status as an 'outsider'.

Only the next month Panofsky received an ominous letter from Francis Henry Taylor, the prominent and highly influential Director of the Metropolitan Museum of Art. Having listened to Panofsky speak at a *College Art Association* dinner, Taylor felt compelled to inform the émigré scholar,

"I am not, as you may have suspected, in sympathy with the usual practice of German Kunstwissenschaft and, except as a jeu d'esprit, I find the temptations of iconography too unrewarding to be dangled before the eyes of the uneager American student. For this reason I am opposed to the type of instruction which many of the foreign scholars have been giving our people recently. In opposing it I have often been suspected of being guided by prejudice. That is not the case. On the

⁴⁶³ Howard Devree, 'Early Italian Masters', *The New York Times*, Sunday December 26th, 1943.

⁴⁶⁴ *Ibid.*

contrary it is a deep conviction that American scholarship, however difficult the path, must develop in its own way and not be reduced to the production of footnotes to someone else's contributions to art history."⁴⁶⁵

Like Devree, Taylor believed strongly that there was a tangible distinction between *German* art history and the kind of approach that was more properly suited to the American people. Once more, Panofsky found himself specifically targeted for importing a 'foreign' scholarship deemed antithetical to American mores.

Only the next year Taylor went on to vent his chauvinist views further, in his book *Babel's Tower: The Dilemma of the Modern Museum*.⁴⁶⁶ In this publication Taylor declared that the incursion of German *Kunstwissenschaft* had spelt catastrophe for the American art museum:

[The] German passion for...spinning a priori theories from artificially established premises...set a standard for unintelligibility...which has done more to keep the public out of our museums than any regulations issued by trustees or government bureaucracies have ever succeeded in doing.⁴⁶⁷

Once more German art history was derided for its elitism and its lack of value to the everyday American citizen,

More and more the specialist has withdrawn into a world of his own, writing learned and pseudo-scientific dissertations addressed to a few colleagues.⁴⁶⁸

And contemplating the end of the War, Taylor surmised,

Our soldiers and sailors, who have learned the lesson of world geography so bitterly, will be the first to demand a return once more to the humanities...unless of course we want to see these veterans peddling the golden apple of Hesperides on the street corners of Chicago and New York we must give them something more rewarding than iconology. Our job is to deal straightforwardly in human values. Had our German colleagues been more concerned with these in teaching their Nazi pupils, they might not find themselves in their present situation.⁴⁶⁹

It was obvious that Taylor had Panofsky squarely in mind when he composed this xenophobic diatribe against 'Germanic' art scholarship, and this was certainly well recognised at the time.⁴⁷⁰

Panofsky did receive support from some American associates, but he would also have been well

⁴⁶⁵ Francis Henry Taylor to Panofsky, January 29th, 1944 (929).

⁴⁶⁶ F.H. Taylor, *Babel's Tower: The Dilemma of the Modern Museum*, 1945.

⁴⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 16.

⁴⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, p44.

⁴⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, p50f.

⁴⁷⁰ M. Schapiro, 'Review of *Babel's Tower: the Dilemma of the Modern Museum*', in *The Art Bulletin*, 27:4, 1945, p273.

aware that there were many others who endorsed Taylor's opinion.⁴⁷¹ To be personally targeted by prominent public figures such as Taylor and Devree would have been galling for an émigré scholar such as Panofsky, who had made every effort to 'fit in' and to ease himself, as smoothly as possible, into American life.

The Life and Art of Albrecht Dürer (1943)

Panofsky was steering a delicate course in enacting his transition into American scholarly life. He wanted to influence the institutionalisation and professionalization of the discipline of art history in his adopted country but he remained extremely wary of appearing at all conspicuous as a 'foreigner'. Panofsky's next major publication, *The Life and Art of Albrecht Dürer*, epitomized his careful approach to the exigencies of this acculturation process. This publication marks the point at which Panofsky established his *American* voice.

Panofsky's *Dürer* developed from the Norman Wait Harris Lectures delivered at Northwestern University in 1938.⁴⁷² This was really Panofsky's first American textbook. Whereas *Studies in Iconology* had been a collection of shorter essays on individual topics, *The Life and Art of Albrecht Dürer* was a comprehensive, in-depth study of one artist. Panofsky had written extensively on Dürer in Germany.⁴⁷³ Indeed, Dürer's life and art had been the primary focus of Panofsky's research, and in response to the invitation to lecture on this artist the émigré scholar declared, "I cannot but welcome the opportunity of talking on a subject which has commanded my attention from the very beginning of my career."⁴⁷⁴ As such, *The Life and Art of Albrecht Dürer* provides an instructive example of Panofsky's efforts to translate his 'German' art-historical scholarship for his new American audience.

⁴⁷¹ See, for example, Bernard C. Heyl, 'Review of *Babel's Tower: the Dilemma of the Modern Museum*', *College Art Journal*, 5:2, January 1946, pp146-8, p147.

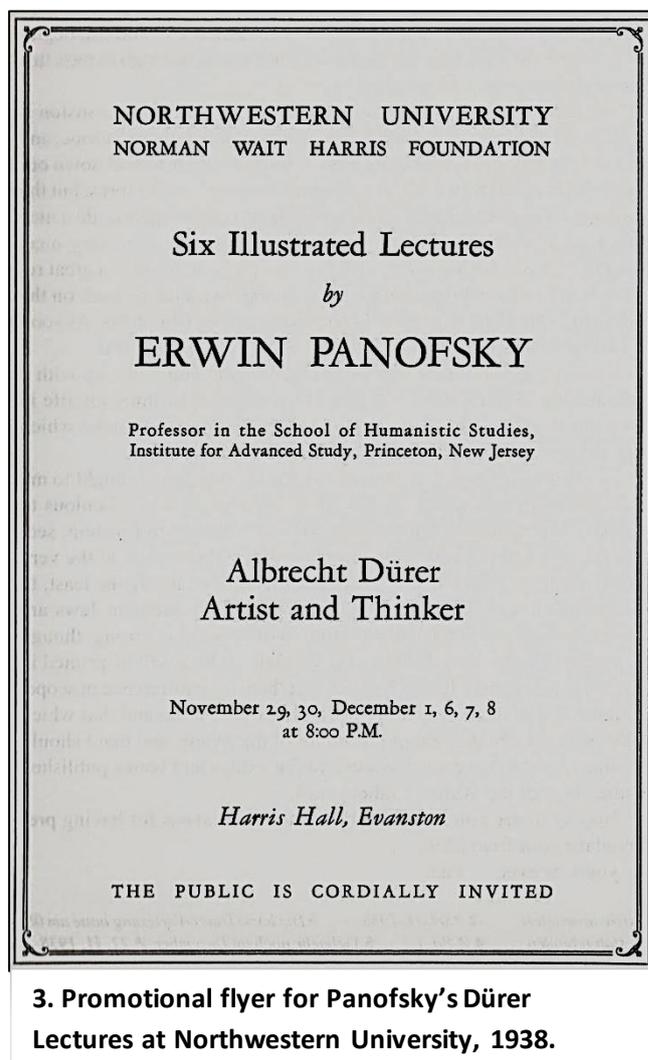
⁴⁷² Theodore Koch invited Panofsky upon the recommendation of Rensselaer Lee, a former student of Panofsky's who was by this point a Professor at Northwestern. Theodore Koch to Panofsky, August 12th, 1938 (711).

⁴⁷³ For Panofsky's extensive German-language work on Dürer see Bibliography.

⁴⁷⁴ Panofsky to Theodore Koch, August 24th, 1938 (714). See also, Panofsky to Tarkington, December 27th, 1941 (843).

Once again, Panofsky had to be mindful in his presentation of the particular requirements of his new audience. In the invitation from Northwestern, for example, Theodore Koch informed him that he should expect “an interested audience made up of ‘town and gown.’”⁴⁷⁵ The promotional material for Panofsky’s Wait Harris lectures was then emblazoned with the legend, “The Public is Cordially Invited”. Panofsky had already delivered a lecture course on *Dürer as Artist and Thinker* in 1931, during his very first spell at NYU. He had also developed an English-language manuscript for a book on the German artist from these lecture scripts, with the assistance of Margaret Barr. However, he had been informed by Morey at that juncture that “the Princeton press (could) not consider the publication unless it would be remodelled as to become a small book which has a chance to sell.”⁴⁷⁶ Even before his lectures at Northwestern then, Panofsky was quite aware that any prospective publication on Dürer would have to be more ‘popular’, and tailored to the particular requirements of an American audience. Indeed, in the preface to *The Life and Art of Albrecht Dürer* Panofsky pointed out that, owing to the fact that the book developed from a lecture series, it was “addressed to a ‘mixed audience’ rather than to scholars.”⁴⁷⁷

In *The Life and Art of Albrecht Dürer* Panofsky provided a veritable *tour de force* of the iconological ‘method’ in action. Once again he was keen to provide a corrective to the strict formalism of Wölfflin. Wölfflin’s *Die Kunst Albrecht Dürers* (1905) had been the last major monograph on the artist, and although Panofsky admired this work,⁴⁷⁸ he was also convinced that “the lives of the great



⁴⁷⁵ Koch to Panofsky, August 12th, 1938 (711).

⁴⁷⁶ Panofsky to Margaret Barr, May 7th, 1932 (311).

⁴⁷⁷ *Albrecht Dürer*, pxi. In later editions Panofsky noted that the book was “addressed to the student as well as the ‘general reader’.” Preface to the 1954 ed. p. ix.

⁴⁷⁸ Panofsky to Paul Frankl, February 7th, 1957 (2040).

artists have to be re-written by each generation."⁴⁷⁹ The émigré scholar obviously believed it was time to deliver an iconological interpretation.⁴⁸⁰ Whereas Wölfflin had concentrated upon formal analysis, Panofsky's *The Life and Art of Albrecht Dürer*, as the title recommends, provided a much wider, more comprehensive and contextualised appraisal of Dürer's work.⁴⁸¹ Panofsky delivered a meaningful analysis of Dürer's art illuminated through recourse to a great wealth of historical documentation. The literature, the philosophy and the religious ideas of the period are all summoned to play a part in Panofsky's narrative, and a detailed analysis of Dürer's own writings, and particularly his correspondence, provides the basis for an intellectual (even psychological) portrayal of the artist's individual character and temperament.⁴⁸²

Dürer's relationship with Italy is the major leitmotif of Panofsky's book. He examines the correspondence between Dürer and the humanist Willibald Pirckheimer, for example, demonstrating how the artist's mind was thus opened to the influence of antiquity and the new artistic ideas then emanating from Renaissance Italy.⁴⁸³ For Panofsky, Dürer's contact with Pirckheimer and with the humanism then burgeoning in Nuremberg,

...sufficed to show him a 'new kingdom' beyond the Alps and he set out to conquer it. Dürer's first trip to Italy, brief though it was, may be called the beginning of the Renaissance in the Northern countries. He became at once possessed with a passionate wish that was to become one of the persistent purposes of his life: he felt that somehow the German artists should participate in the 'regrowth' ('Wiedererwachsung') of all the arts brought about by the Italians 'in the last one hundred and fifty years after they had been hiding for a millennium'.⁴⁸⁴

In Panofsky's narrative it was the encounter with Italian art theory that had the most profound impact upon Dürer. Panofsky claims that the visits to Italy engendered,

...a fundamental change in Dürer's style and 'Weltanschauung'. He began to feel that his previous works, however much admired by all, were open to that very criticism which he himself was to level, in later years, at German art in general: that they were 'powerful but unsound', revealing as they did a lack of that 'right grounding' which seemed the only safeguard against 'errors in design'. So he began to study the

⁴⁷⁹ E. Panofsky, 'Report on the Activities of the Institute for Advanced Study', 1941, op. cit., p290.

⁴⁸⁰ Panofsky to Saxl, March 5th, 1943 (892).

⁴⁸¹ Jeffrey Chipps Smith provides instructive insight into how the approaches of Panofsky and Wölfflin differed: 'Introduction' to the Princeton Classic Edition of *The Life and Art of Albrecht Dürer*, 2005, pxxxiii-xxxvi.

⁴⁸² See, for example *Albrecht Dürer*, p10-11.

⁴⁸³ Ibid, p8.

⁴⁸⁴ Ibid.

essential branches of Renaissance art theory: the theory of human proportions, the theory of the proportions of animals; and, last but not least, perspective.⁴⁸⁵

In order to demonstrate the extent of Dürer's engagement with these new ideas Panofsky examined the many prints and series of prints in which the artist investigated human proportions and experimented with linear perspective. He also devoted a full chapter to analysis of Dürer as a Theorist of Art to show how serious the artist was in his attempt to bring these ideas to bear on German artistic practice. The advent of artistic theory in Italy in the fifteenth century had begun to give weight and substance to the artist's new claim to intellectual status. And Panofsky demonstrated how this chimed harmoniously with Dürer's own, already considerable, sense of self-worth, quoting the artist's now-famous letter, written to Pirckheimer from Italy, in which he lamented, "Here I am a gentleman, at home I am parasite."⁴⁸⁶ Ultimately, for Panofsky at least, Dürer's engagement with Italian art theory, and his utilisation of linear perspective in particular, was symbolic of his newfound status as a *Renaissance* artist.⁴⁸⁷

One criticism regularly levelled at Panofsky's reading of Dürer's life and art is that he makes too much of the impact of Italy upon the artist. Panofsky's work is now often criticised for its Italianate bias, for its harbouring of a conceptual framework that privileges the achievements of the Italian Renaissance above all others.⁴⁸⁸ While there is some truth to such claims, there is no denying the fact that Dürer's engagement with Italian Renaissance art and ideas *did* have a profound impact upon his work. Furthermore, I would suggest that Panofsky's reading of Dürer's career is a little more nuanced than many critics suggest.

Panofsky *did* place great stock in the idea that the Germans and Italians had their own individual, even opposed, artistic *Weltanschauungen*.⁴⁸⁹ But he also suggested that Dürer's life and work was actually characterised by an on-going tension, a continuing oscillation between these two poles. Dürer's lifelong attempt to balance these conflicting influences or "tendencies" is described by Panofsky as, "a constant struggle between reason and intuition, generalizing formalism and particularising realism, humanistic self-reliance and medieval humility."⁴⁹⁰ As Panofsky writes,

The very fact that the most productive artist of a country previously opposed to theorizing in the field of art should have felt the urge to undertake scientific

⁴⁸⁵ Ibid., p80. This point reflects the main argument in Panofsky's earlier publication, *Dürers Kunsttheorie*, (1915).

⁴⁸⁶ *Albrecht Dürer*, p9.

⁴⁸⁷ Ibid., p261.

⁴⁸⁸ Alpers, *Is Art History?* op. cit., p5.

⁴⁸⁹ He writes, for example, of "the specifically Germanic preference for the particular as against the universal, for the curious as against the exemplary, and for the personal as against the objective." *Albrecht Dürer*, p284.

⁴⁹⁰ Ibid, p14. See also, p80.

treatises on perspective, human proportions, etc., reveals a tension between conflicting psychological impulses. Dürer was the most patient observer of realistic details and was enamoured of the most 'objective' of all techniques, line engraving in copper; yet he was a visionary, 'full of inward figures,' to quote his own characteristic words. Convinced that the power of artistic creation was a 'mystery,' not to be taught, not to be learned, not to be accounted for except by the grace of God and 'influences from above,' yet he craved rational principles. He felt that without 'Kunst' – that is, knowledge – art was a haphazard mixture of thoughtless imitation, irrational fancy and blindly accepted practice (Brauch). He frankly admitted that the German artists of his period, however excellent in technique and natural talent, lacked the indispensable complement of what he called the 'right foundations' (rechter Grund), and he spent half his life trying to cure this deficiency. Yet he untiringly repeated that theoretical rules were incapable of doing justice to the 'infinite complexity of God's creation,' and that their value was sorely limited, not only by the inequality of individual gifts and tastes but also by the finiteness of human reason as such.⁴⁹¹

Furthermore, Panofsky also suggested that towards the end of his career Dürer's intense preoccupation with Italian art theory, and his agreement that "...focused perspective was not only a guarantee of correctness but, even more, a guarantee of aesthetic perfection,"⁴⁹² was significantly tempered under the influence of an emerging, and "uncompromisingly theocentric" Lutheranism.⁴⁹³ Panofsky examines in great detail how Dürer grappled to resolve the tension that existed between his ideas concerning, on the one hand, the power of the uniquely creative individual artist and, on the other, his more pious sense of self, defined in relation to the omnipotent Creator. Ultimately, for Panofsky, it was from this grappling that the artist developed his own unique conception of artistic genius.⁴⁹⁴

Panofsky analyses Dürer's 'Master Engraving' *Melencolia I* at some length to expound upon the tension he discerned in the artist's life and work. Indeed, for Panofsky, this print offered a particularly revealing insight into Dürer's individual *Weltanschauung*. As such, this section of the book is indicative of the author's overall interpretation of *The Life and Art of Albrecht Dürer*.

Panofsky had worked extensively on the *Melencolia I* with Fritz Saxl in Hamburg, and he relied heavily on this scholarship in his 1943 publication.⁴⁹⁵ In the explication of this significant print Panofsky leads his reader on a detailed historical excursus, through the complex and involved

⁴⁹¹ Ibid, p11-12.

⁴⁹² Ibid, p261.

⁴⁹³ Ibid, p281-2.

⁴⁹⁴ Ibid., p282. Panofsky's argument in this regard summarises that put forward in the final chapter of his 1924 publication, *Idea*, op. cit.

⁴⁹⁵ E. Panofsky and F. Saxl, *Dürer's 'Melencolia I'. Eine quellen- und typengeschichtliche Untersuchung (Studien der Bibliothek Warburg, 2)*, 1923.

representational traditions of melancholy, geometry and the liberal arts. He demonstrates how Dürer fused in this engraving the hitherto disparate iconographical traditions of melancholy and 'saturnine genius', to give expression to the idea of the creative artist who seeks to understand and harness the harmony of the cosmos, at the same time as he is confronted with his own incontrovertible subordination to the work of God. Detailed iconographical research provides a platform from which Panofsky proceeds to interpret the *Melencolia I* as an index of Dürer's individual *Weltanschauung*:

[T]he Melencolia I reflects the whole of Dürer's personality...He knew the 'inspirations from above', and he knew the feeling of 'powerlessness' and dejection. But, more important still, he was also an artist-geometrician, and one who suffered from the very limitations of the discipline he loved. In his younger days...he had hoped to capture absolute beauty by means of a ruler and compass. Shortly before he composed the Melencolia I he was forced to admit: 'But what beauty is, I know not. Nobody knows it except God.' Some years later he wrote...'The lie is in our understanding, and darkness is so firmly entrenched in our mind that even our groping will fail' – a phrase that might well serve as a motto for the Melencolia I. Thus Dürer's most perplexing engraving is, at the same time, the objective statement of a general philosophy and the subjective confession of an individual man. It fuses, and transforms, two great representational and literary traditions, that of Melancholy as one of the four humours and that of Geometry as one of the Seven Liberal Arts. It typifies the artist of the Renaissance who respects practical skill, but longs all the more fervently for mathematical theory - who feels 'inspired' by celestial influences and internal ideas, but suffers all the more deeply from his human frailty and intellectual finiteness...In doing all this it is in a sense a spiritual self-portrait of Albrecht Dürer.⁴⁹⁶

It is clear that in proposing this rather uneasy, disquieting engraving as an emblem of Dürer's individual character, Panofsky believed that deep tensions remained in the artist's personality. This was no hagiography. Panofsky was not presenting Dürer as a neatly packaged product, with all the complexities conveniently ironed out. Instead, *The Life and Art of Albrecht Dürer* was a close up, detailed examination of a complex and multifaceted human individual. The influence of Italian art theory does not, in the end, provide a neat resolution to Dürer's inner conflict. Ultimately, for Panofsky, Dürer's signal achievement was his self-consciousness in regards the differences between the German and Italian artistic and intellectual *Weltanschauungen*. Panofsky portrays Dürer as an autonomous individual who was able to *objectify* these two traditions and, in so doing, attempt his own unique synthesis.

⁴⁹⁶ *Albrecht Dürer*, p171.

In his detailed Iconological analysis of the *Melencolia I* print, Panofsky did not allow the artwork itself to be lost amid a preponderance of contextualising historical details. Indeed, throughout his *Dürer* Panofsky provides sensitive and evocative descriptions of Dürer's individual works. He leads his reader, through meticulous visual analysis, in a detailed formal and aesthetic examination of Dürer's oeuvre.⁴⁹⁷ Panofsky also demonstrates how Dürer revolutionised the graphic arts.⁴⁹⁸ With detailed descriptions and forensic practical insights he demonstrates how the artist applied and developed techniques such as woodcut, engraving, dry point and etching. He delves deeply into the minutiae of the different processes – how the various artistic tools and implements were used, their material consequence and ultimate aesthetic significance.⁴⁹⁹ The reader is thus furnished with a concrete understanding of how Dürer's graphic works actually came into being, and this only serves to accentuate the undoubted achievement of this 'Apelles of black lines'.

Panofsky's approach in *The Life and Art of Albrecht Dürer* went far beyond iconographical identification. This was, in a much deeper and more comprehensive sense, "Iconology". As Panofsky explained when he was writing the book, he had,

*"...tried to bring about a reintegration of formal analysis and iconography, with a certain amount of connoisseurship as an indispensable prerequisite. The history of art is, by definition, an historical pursuit the objects of which demand to be interpreted as aesthetic phenomena and, therefore, as unities. They will reveal their meaning only if interpreted as integral unities of technique, form and subject matter...and if set out against the religious, philosophical, and social background of their times."*⁵⁰⁰

Throughout his *Dürer*, Panofsky moves seamlessly from close, empirical examination of individual artworks, to discussion of Dürer as an individual personality, to the elucidation of the wider historical context in which the artist was working. The book is a masterful achievement, demonstrating an assured handling of history, philosophy, religion, artistic technique, formal analysis and connoisseurship. Panofsky's process of hermeneutic interpretation, like the smooth swing of a

⁴⁹⁷ See, for example, "Clair-Obscur' Principle in Line Prints', in *Albrecht Dürer*, p135.

⁴⁹⁸ Panofsky opens his book with the bold claim that, "It was by means of the graphic arts that Germany finally attained the rank of a Great Power in the domain of art, and this chiefly through the activity of one man who, though famous as a painter, became an international figure only in his capacity of engraver and woodcut designer: Albrecht Dürer." Ibid, pp3-4.

⁴⁹⁹ Panofsky includes sections on *Reform of Woodcut* (p47), *Development in the Early Woodcuts* (p49), *Reform of Engraving* (p63), and *Development in the Early Engravings* (p67). Panofsky also provides an illustrated description of *The Burin and its Use* (p64), as well as a section on the *Fusion of Burin and Dry Point Technique* (p65). Panofsky provides detailed analysis of other aspects of Dürer's creative output too; such as *Technical Applications of Geometry* (p257), an excursus on Dürer's forays into *Stereography* (p259), and even a critique of the artist's *Scientific Prose* (p245).

⁵⁰⁰ E. Panofsky, 'Report on the Activities of the Institute for Advanced Study', 1941, op. cit., p290.

pendulum, glides to and fro between each of these areas to build a penetrating, multi-layered and multifaceted understanding of *The Life and Art of Albrecht Dürer*.

Panofsky's *Dürer* was a significant achievement in terms of *style* too. As had been the case with *Studies in Iconology*, the structure of this publication corresponded directly to the pattern of the lecture series from which it was derived.⁵⁰¹ Once again he followed the same process employed with *Studies in Iconology*, developing his actual lecture scripts into publishable text with the aid of a native English speaker.⁵⁰² Panofsky remained keen to cultivate in his writing a sense of familiarity and intimacy, and he worked hard to fashion his English in a conversational and easily palatable form.⁵⁰³ Panofsky chooses to gently 'remind' his reader of facts and details throughout the book, rather than confronting them bluntly with their own ignorance.⁵⁰⁴ On one occasion, for example, he suggests that, "In order to understand the title *Melencolia I...we must recall to mind* that theory of the 'four humours'..." – a theory which Panofsky himself goes on to clarify at some length nevertheless.⁵⁰⁵ Other iconographical clarifications are slipped in here and there, merely "by the way..."⁵⁰⁶

As he had with *Studies in Iconology*, Panofsky worked hard to retain in the text of his *Dürer* something of the spoken-word element of his oral delivery. Oral recitation remained an important part of Panofsky's effort to develop an easy and mellifluous writing style in his publications, and he read aloud lengthy sections of his Dürer manuscript to Booth Tarkington and company at 'the Floats' in the summer of 1942, in order that the book retained that conversational quality.⁵⁰⁷ Panofsky also omitted footnotes entirely from this work. The main text of his *Dürer* is completely self-contained, and this allows for a continuous, conversational, flowing prose style. The book reads in such a way that it almost seems to transcend the need for interjection or interruption. Panofsky had obviously taken on Morey's recommendation that any Dürer textbook would have to have "a chance to sell."

⁵⁰¹ A detailed synopsis of Panofsky's lectures at Northwestern shows that the first lecture corresponds to chapter one in the book; the second lecture to chapters two and three; the third lecture to chapter four; the fourth to chapter five; the fifth to chapters six and seven; and the sixth to chapter eight. See, D. Wuttke, *Erwin Panofsky: Korrespondenz*, Band II, pp170-176.

⁵⁰² Panofsky thanks "Miss Margot Cutter for her understanding help in revising the English." *Albrecht Dürer*, p*xii*.

⁵⁰³ Panofsky writes of Dürer and Pirckheimer, for example, "The relationship between this full-blooded humanist and Dürer was one of complete confidence and intimacy, bred out of affection, fostered by a close community of interests and spiced with good masculine chaff." *Ibid*, p7.

⁵⁰⁴ *Ibid*, p158.

⁵⁰⁵ *Ibid*, p157 (my italics).

⁵⁰⁶ *Ibid*, p161.

⁵⁰⁷ These oral presentations at 'The Floats' were a regular occurrence in the early 1940s. See, Krautheimer to Panofsky, June 15th, 1945 (AAA), & Panofsky to Betty Trotter, October 5th, 1944 (957a).

In *The Life and Art of Albrecht Dürer* Panofsky presented to his American audience an enormous wealth of scholarship and erudition, but he did so in an entirely *digestible* way. Based upon years of detailed primary research, the book is a quite conscious re-presentation of the author's extensive German-language scholarship in English, but there is nothing in it that smacks of awkward translation, nor the supercilious deportment that Americans often expected from the 'foreign' scholar. Panofsky's *Dürer* marks the point at which the author had perfected his easy and mellifluous English-language style. He had found his *American* voice. It could even be conjectured that Panofsky was, in effect, attempting to efface from his writing the thick German accent he retained in his spoken voice.⁵⁰⁸ The émigré scholar wanted to *sound* American, even as he presented his translation of what was still a 'foreign' approach to art scholarship in the United States.

The year after *The Life and Art of Albrecht Dürer* was published, Panofsky admitted he was a great admirer of F.D. Roosevelt's writing and oratory style.⁵⁰⁹ Roosevelt's celebrated 'fireside chats' had been regular occurrences right throughout Panofsky's time in the United States. This was a turbulent and troubled period of American history, extending from the Depression to the Second World War, and, as one historian has pointed out, in formulating his fireside 'chats', "Roosevelt's purpose was to allay fears, to calm, assure and comfort."⁵¹⁰ The American President was adept at presenting potentially unpleasant content in eminently palatable form. He used straightforward, everyday language in an attempt to connect with the ordinary American citizen, and historians now document how many of those who heard the President's radio broadcasts remember feeling like he had been addressing them personally, in the comfort of their own home. One could conjecture that Panofsky learned a great deal from Roosevelt's measured delivery. Describing his *Dürer* in 1953, for example, Panofsky would write,

He who speaks of the life and works of an individual artist places his listeners in armchairs, so to speak, and invites them to admire the varying aspects of a sculptured figure displayed before them on a revolving base.⁵¹¹

It does not seem too much of a stretch to imagine that the famously intimate and familiar character of Roosevelt's 'fireside chats', could have had a significant influence on the development of Panofsky's own English language writing style.

⁵⁰⁸ Stephen Games has pointed out that Panofsky was actually precluded from presenting programmes on BBC radio on account of his strong German accent. 'Editor's Introduction' to *Pevsner on Art and Architecture: The Radio Talks*, S. Games (ed.), 2002, pxxxvii.

⁵⁰⁹ Panofsky informed Tarkington, "(T)he very style of his speeches and writings, as it hits the ear of an old philologist, seems to reveal a genuinely humanistic attitude." November 11th, 1944 (966). See also, Panofsky to Gabe Sanders, September 16th, 1949 (1325).

⁵¹⁰ R.D. Buhite & D.W. Levy, *FDR's Fireside Chats*, 1992, p xv. See also, G. Storm, 'FDR and WGY: The Origins of the Fireside Chats', *New York History*, 88:2, spring 2007, pp176-197; p177.

⁵¹¹ E. Panofsky, *Early Netherlandish Painting: Its Origins and Character*, 1953, pvii.

Despite the effort he had put in to *The Life and Art of Albrecht Dürer* it is clear from Panofsky's letters that he was genuinely concerned about the reaction the book might engender. Fully conscious of the compromises he had made in deference to his American readership, Panofsky was particularly apprehensive about how the book would be received by his fellow émigrés. Just after his *Dürer* was published, for example, Panofsky wrote to Booth Tarkington,

*"I have to be particularly thankful for the encouragement you gave me in relation to my Dürer book. In arranging it as I did I ventured the attempt to sit on two stools (with the probable result of sitting between them), namely, to be more or less readable and yet not altogether amateurish. Now, my critics will all be 'professionals,' and most of them will be German-born like myself. They will naturally and quite legitimately concentrate on factual errors (of which there will be many) and controversial problems of a specialised nature."*⁵¹²

Panofsky's correspondence with Fritz Saxl is particularly revealing in this regard. After a period of estrangement, the two men had begun to communicate again just as Panofsky was preparing *Dürer* for publication.⁵¹³ The two men had worked together closely and extensively on Dürer 'problems' in their Hamburg days; and Saxl was himself enmeshed at this point, with the Warburg Library in London, in a process of intellectual acculturation, albeit in a quite different environment. The two former colleagues had much to discuss. When the *Dürer* book was published Panofsky informed Saxl,

*"It seems to please all sorts of intelligent people who do not know much about Dürer while the specialists maintain a grim silence, chalk up errors – of which there are many – and murmur darkly about 'popularization'...The inference is that my mind has become more common or duller than it used to be."*⁵¹⁴

Panofsky was particularly self-conscious in regards to the fact that he had put together a large-scale, 'general' textbook on one artist. In German scholarship the norm had been for detailed extended essays; comprehensive, 'up-close' research focussed upon particular, specialised 'problems'. For Panofsky, art history was an interpretive discipline, but he was also adamant that interpretations had to be tempered by up-close, detailed, primary historical research. As he intimated in 1941, there were dangers involved in painting a historical picture with too broad brushstrokes:

"It goes without saying that an 'interpretive' method would be dangerous rather than fruitful were it not based on the meticulous and, at times, admittedly pedantic investigation of special problems...Otherwise the 'interpretive' method would

⁵¹² Panofsky to Tarkington, September 23rd, 1943 (916).

⁵¹³ Panofsky to Saxl, May 9th, 1942 (861).

⁵¹⁴ Panofsky to Saxl, December 14th, 1943 (922).

degenerate into the production of second-hand synopses which presume to 'catch the spirit' while others do the groundwork."⁵¹⁵

Of course, Panofsky's *Dürer* was the product of years of detailed, primary research, and it incorporated the findings of many individual, more 'specialised' articles. Nonetheless Panofsky remained hugely self-conscious in regards to the more 'general' nature of his 1943 publication. Informing Saxl of the large-scale, 'popular' nature of the textbook he was working on, Panofsky felt forced to declare in confessional tones,

"I had to do this because I had given some lectures on Dürer which had to be printed in one form or another; a custom which will also give rise to a still worse little book on the Gothic style (as a whole if you please!) in the not too distant future. My old 'Iconology' owes its existence to the same custom...[Edgar] Wind once made the remark that America 'loosens one's tongue', and he's quite right – though it is perhaps somewhat demoralising."⁵¹⁶

Similarly, the next year Panofsky informed his old Hamburg student William Heckscher that,

"The old Dürer has finally appeared. It is well liked by everybody excepting those who know the subject...The trouble is I have tried to be kind of readable without being altogether amateurish – with the quotable result of sitting between two stools. This results from those wonderful lectureships 'with publication required' which one is naturally too vain and greedy to decline and must then print with a bad conscience. Yet I am already doing the same thing again, this time concerning Gothic. Scalded child loves the fire."⁵¹⁷

Panofsky was particularly uneasy about the fact he had dispensed with footnotes. In his letters to Saxl he returned to this point over and over again; admitting, for example, that his *Dürer* would be, "a rather 'popular' book - my first without footnotes"⁵¹⁸, and that, "It will be quite easy to read (my first book without footnotes!)"⁵¹⁹. The omission of footnotes helped achieve that mellifluous, conversational writing style Panofsky worked hard on, but it also had a definite significance for any properly 'critical' humanist scholar. Footnotes were the material manifestation of that old scholarly adage of 'dwarves standing on the shoulders of giants so that they can see further'. By indexing the work of one individual to previous scholarship footnotes provided the physical representation of the humanist scholar's respect for tradition. Without such scaffolding, any individual contribution *could* seem like it was being presented as an unmediated, lapidary and entirely 'objective' statement.

⁵¹⁵ E. Panofsky, 'Report on the Activities of the Institute for Advanced Study', 1941, op. cit., p291.

⁵¹⁶ Panofsky to Saxl, May 9th, 1942 (861). See also Panofsky to Saxl, October 17th, 1942 (881).

⁵¹⁷ Panofsky to William Heckscher, September 25th, 1943 (917).

⁵¹⁸ Panofsky to Saxl, May 9th, 1942 (861).

⁵¹⁹ Panofsky to Saxl, October 17th, 1942 (881).

Panofsky was known for his insistence that, as scholars, “We stand on our footnotes”⁵²⁰, and so omitting them from his *Dürer* caused him considerable consternation.

As recompense Panofsky provided a large ‘handlist’ which, along with the illustrations, comprised an entire second volume of *The Life and Art of Albrecht Dürer*. Indexed to the main text, the handlist provided the supporting scholarly apparatus. It credits the bedrock of historical knowledge upon which Panofsky founded his own individual interpretation of Dürer’s life and art; demonstrating that his analysis and interpretation was indeed reliant upon previous research and scholarship. The handlist in itself provides a significant contribution to Dürerology. And ultimately it shows that Panofsky’s *Dürer* book was itself deeply contextualised.

Panofsky explained in his Preface that the handlist was included “in order to make the book somewhat more useful to the serious student.”⁵²¹ He also informed Fritz Saxl that,

*“...whatever ‘scholarly’ information is given will appear in the second volume which consists of a kind of handlist...which refers to Lippmann, Dodgson, Winkler, Tietzes, Klassiker der Kunst and in case of prints, to Dodgson, Kurth and Meder.”*⁵²²

However, Panofsky obviously had serious misgivings about presenting his work in this bipartite format. When the *Dürer* was ready for printing he again wrote to Saxl,

*“It sort of sums up my, and, in part, our work about the gentleman, but I am not quite satisfied. I have tried the impossible, namely to write a ‘readable’ text, even without footnotes, and yet to contribute a little to scholarship...in an enormous handlist which, together with the illustrations, forms the second volume. Thus the whole is a little, or rather more than a little, uneven in style and appearance.”*⁵²³

When the Princeton University Press decided to omit the handlist altogether from later editions, creating a more economical one-volume book, Panofsky was not best pleased. He was obviously extremely cognisant of the compromise being made between the ‘popular’ and the ‘scholarly’, as in a preface added to these later editions he stated openly, and somewhat curtly,

For reasons best known to itself, the Princeton University Press has proposed to make my book on Albrecht Dürer available in what may be called a portable edition: a single volume, containing the text as well as the illustrations, but not the Handlist of Works.⁵²⁴

⁵²⁰ C.H. Smyth, *Thoughts on Panofsky’s First Years at Princeton*, op. cit., p356.

⁵²¹ *Albrecht Dürer*, pxi

⁵²² Panofsky to Saxl, October 17th, 1942 (881).

⁵²³ Panofsky to Saxl, March 5th, 1943 (892).

⁵²⁴ *Albrecht Dürer*, preface to 1954 ed. pxi.

Confusingly, and redundantly, the reference numbers relating to the handlist remain within the text of the subsequent one-volume editions. One wonders whether Panofsky refused to re-edit his text as a point of principle.

Ultimately, Panofsky need not have worried about the reception afforded his *Dürer*. The book was overwhelmingly well-received. The response from American scholars, both publicly and privately, was laudatory; with particular approval expressed for Panofsky's ability to present his scholarship in a digestible manner. One enthusiastic American reviewer, for example, described how Panofsky had brought Dürer to life,

...with a deceptively casual skill, a grace which probably no one but a scholar of unimpeachable authority who happened also to have the rare gift of popularisation could command.⁵²⁵

Similarly, Fiske Kimball, director of the Philadelphia Museum of Art, informed Panofsky by letter,

*"I have been reading your Dürer by day and night - dazzling! The inner reconstruction, psychological, intellectual and aesthetic, is incredibly complete and convincing...and, I may add, readable, apt and delightful...[V]ery few people write an English prose as rapid, clear and flexible as yours."*⁵²⁶

Panofsky was particularly gratified by the positive response he received from his fellow émigrés.⁵²⁷ As had been predicted, the major scholarly reviews were penned by German-born art historians who knew the subject and the literature well. And, as had been expected, there were indeed criticisms of some detailed, specialist points. However, the émigré reviews were, on the whole, entirely affirmative. Alfred Neumeyer spoke for many when he declared that Panofsky,

...presents to us what will surely be the most essential work on Dürer for a long time to come...[He takes] us behind the evidence of the finished works. His formal analysis reveals the gradual genesis of artistic creations, retransforming them from a status of being into one of becoming; while his iconographical analysis provides the complete ideological material out of which the artist consciously or subconsciously must have chosen his specific formulation.⁵²⁸

Neumeyer understood that Panofsky had provided a multi-layered demonstration of art history in practice. Furthermore, he acknowledged Panofsky's achievement in providing a synthesis of the

⁵²⁵ P. Rhys Adams, 'A Fully Proportioned European: *Albrecht Dürer*, by Erwin Panofsky', *The Kenyon Review*, 6:1, winter 1944, pp129-134; p129. For a further example of favourable comment published by American scholars see, S. Cauman, 'The Science of Art History', *College Art Journal*, 4:1, November 1944, pp23-32; esp. p29f.

⁵²⁶ Fiske Kimball to Panofsky, September 17th, 1943 (915).

⁵²⁷ Panofsky to Adolph Katzenellenbogen, September 28th, 1943 (918); Panofsky to Hanns Swarzenski, November 23rd, 1943 (921); Panofsky to Saxl, December 14th, 1943 (922).

⁵²⁸ A. Neumeyer, 'Review of *Albrecht Dürer*', *College Art Journal*, 3:3, March 1944, pp117-122; 118-9.

Dürerology, paying particular tribute to the importance and value of the handlist.⁵²⁹ Wolfgang Stechow provided a remarkably similar appreciation in his *Art Bulletin* review.⁵³⁰

Of course, Panofsky's fellow émigrés would have well understood the context in which the book was written – what Panofsky was doing, and the pressures under which he was working in America. They were thus particularly well placed to judge the ultimate achievement of the book, and Panofsky was gratified by their response. In a letter of thanks to Neumeyer, Panofsky declared,

*"I am very much in your debt for your kindness in letting me read your review avant la lettre...but even more so for the review itself...[I]n your case it is not so much the praise which gratifies me but your real understanding for my intentions. God knows, I have no right to inveigh against 'specialists', but in the case of Dürer it seemed to me that he had indeed been buried alive beneath the grains of sand which we, busy ants, had been heaping on him, and I did wish to unbury him a little (so that I was quite prepared for yells of 'popularisation'); and I tried to do this by means of using all the instruments prepared by our greater forerunners in the unjustly maligned nineteenth century. You have very rightly perceived this intention, and you have been kind enough to see the positive side of this attempt at synthesising compositional, iconographic and even technical considerations...In sum I am very much in your debt. Yours is the first review written by a man who knows the subject, and I am sincerely and profoundly grateful for you having undertaken it, and for having emphasised the better points rather than the shortcomings."*⁵³¹

There is no doubt that throughout *The Life and Art of Albrecht Dürer* Panofsky is in command of his material. The book is, at one and the same time, both detailed and broad in sweep and interpretation. It is a fact that no art historian had produced a book such as this before, assiduously detailed and 'scholarly', but still eminently accessible, readable, and 'popular'. This work set an almost unrealistically high standard in terms of what an art-historical monograph could do. The *Dürer* cemented Panofsky's status as the pre-eminent art historian in America. And the success of the book provided Panofsky with a renewed confidence in the style and the approach he had adopted. In effect, the *Dürer* book cemented Panofsky's *American* persona.

Many reviewers commented at the time upon the authority and the seeming 'finality' of this book.⁵³² This very 'quality' has become, as we have already seen, a major bone of contention for Panofsky's more modern detractors. Keith Moxey, for example, has complained that the "lapidary quality" of Panofsky's work "suggests the reader is being vouchsafed eternal truths."⁵³³ Moxey takes particular

⁵²⁹ *Ibid.*, p118 & p121.

⁵³⁰ W. Stechow, 'Review of *Albrecht Dürer*', *The Art Bulletin*, 26:3, September 1944, pp197-9.

⁵³¹ Panofsky to Alfred Neumeyer, January 23rd, 1944 (928).

⁵³² Stechow, Review of *Albrecht Dürer*, *op. cit.*, p199.

⁵³³ *Panofsky's Concept of Iconology*, *op. cit.*, p269.

issue with *Dürer*, criticising the author because “his analysis is presented as historical ‘truth’ rather than as contingent historical interpretation.”⁵³⁴ However, such criticism fails to understand Panofsky’s work in the context in which it was written. *The Life and Art of Albrecht Dürer* speaks of the author’s effort to transplant something of his own tradition of art historical scholarship, at the same time as he acknowledged the particular requirements of his new American audience. The book is, in microcosm, the material representation of Panofsky’s acculturation; a complex and involved process upon which he expended a great deal of effort. It seems entirely fitting therefore, that Panofsky dedicated his *Dürer* to the three men who did the most to facilitate his successful establishment in the United States: Walter W.S. Cook, Abraham Flexner and Charles Rufus Morey.⁵³⁵

⁵³⁴ *Panofsky’s Melencolia*, op. cit., p78. See also, *Motivating History*, op. cit., p395.

⁵³⁵ *Albrecht Dürer*, pviii.

4. Establishment

Panofsky the American

Panofsky's *Dürer* demonstrates how hard he worked to cultivate his American persona. Nonetheless, it should not be underestimated just how fully committed Panofsky was to life in the United States. He had made an early decision never to return to Germany, and he and his wife Dora applied for American citizenship at the earliest opportunity, eventually receiving their certificates of naturalisation in 1940.⁵³⁶ John Wheeler, a Physics Professor at Princeton University and the Panofsky's neighbour on Battle Road, acted as referee on the day and later recalled that Panofsky wept openly at the proceedings. The émigré scholar had become an American citizen.

THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA	
ORIGINAL TO BE GIVEN TO THE PERSON NATURALIZED	No. 4865404
GERMAN	NATURALIZED AMERICAN
Petition No. 3616	
Personal description of holder as of date of naturalization: Age 48 years, sex Male, color White, complexion medium, color of eyes Grey-blue, color of hair D. Brown, height 5 feet 3 inches, weight 160 pounds, visible distinctive marks None	
Married status Married	former nationality German
I certify that the description above given is true, and that the photograph affixed hereto is a likeness of me.	
	<i>Erwin Panofsky</i> (Complete and true signature of holder)
	United States of America } s.s. District of New Jersey
<i>Erwin Panofsky</i>	Be it known that ERWIN PANOFSKY then residing at 97 Battle Rd., Princeton, New Jersey having petitioned to be admitted a citizen of the United States of America, and at a term of the DISTRICT Court of THE UNITED STATES held pursuant to law at Trenton, New Jersey on June 7th 1940 the court having found that the petitioner intends to reside permanently in the United States, and in all respects complied with the Naturalization Laws of the United States in such case applicable, and was entitled to be so admitted, the court thereupon ordered that the petitioner be admitted as a citizen of the United States of America.
Seal	In testimony whereof the seal of the court is hereunto affixed this 7th day of June in the year of our Lord nineteen hundred and forty and of our Independence the one hundred and sixty-fourth.
	Benjamin F. Havens Clerk of the U. S. District Court. By <i>Harold K. Pines</i> Deputy Clerk.
DEPARTMENT OF LABOR	

4. Panofsky's Certificate of Naturalisation, 1940.

⁵³⁶ Panofsky to Sachs, February 15th, 1936 (566).

When America entered the Second World War Panofsky was keen to demonstrate his commitment to his adopted country. He joined a Loyalty Committee organised by immigrants from “Nazi and Fascist oppressed countries” with the aim of raising enough money to donate a fighter plane to the United States Army as a symbol of their allegiance.⁵³⁷ And in a letter to Booth Tarkington he further outlined the patriotic duties he and Dora were fulfilling in Princeton:

“We are both, since Pearl Harbor, assiduous plane spotters, proud of having contributed, by our very conscientiousness, to a number of false alarms in New York City; I have been promoted, after much practice, to Second Assistant Nozzle-Holder in the Decontamination Squad, a tough outfit which is supposed to clean up after air raids or gas attacks...and I have handed over my big dog to a Sergeant whom he helps to guard a military objective, attacking every comer on sight.”⁵³⁸

Although this letter evinces a certain self-deprecating humour, Panofsky was also keen to emphasise to his American friend that he was serious in his desire to contribute to the war effort: “I wish we could do more”, he continued, “and we will if and when required.”⁵³⁹

With the country at war there was less activity on the American university campus. Panofsky noted that his teaching duties at NYU had been curtailed because the University was unable to raise the funds to employ him during war time.⁵⁴⁰ There were certainly fewer graduate students at both NYU and Princeton, as many had enlisted in the armed forces.⁵⁴¹ Panofsky was also aware that many of his colleagues at the IAS had signed up or had moved to Washington for “urgent war work.”⁵⁴²

Émigré scholars who had sought refuge in the United States were able to make a unique contribution to the American War effort. Their facility with European languages, and their intimate knowledge of the industries and public utilities behind enemy lines made them much in demand.⁵⁴³ A large number of émigré art historians in particular were recruited by the Office of Strategic Services (OSS), a forerunner of the CIA, formed to coordinate the activities of American armed forces in mainland Europe. These émigré scholars were entrusted with the task of advising the American military on European geography and the locations of important cultural monuments and treasures, and their work fed into the activities of the Roberts Commission, a government organisation created

⁵³⁷ Panofsky to Harold W. Dodds, April 7th, 1942 (856).

⁵³⁸ Panofsky to Tarkington, October 20th, 1942 (884).

⁵³⁹ Ibid.

⁵⁴⁰ Panofsky to Saxl, March 5th, 1943 (892).

⁵⁴¹ Ibid.

⁵⁴² Panofsky to Katharine McBride, March 1st, 1944 (934).

⁵⁴³ M. R. Davie, *Refugees in America*, 1947, p202.

for the 'Protection and Salvage of Artistic and Historic Monuments in War Areas'.⁵⁴⁴ As Richard Krautheimer wrote to Panofsky from Washington in 1943,

*"I have deserted History of Art for the time being. It is interesting work, as a matter of fact it is really exciting and I am convinced that a solid knowledge of Early Christian architecture or Dürer or Leonardo is the best preparation for this kind of war work."*⁵⁴⁵

Signing off, Krautheimer added, "Rens [Lee] mentioned you were thinking of taking a war job. I hope you find something which is interesting and really worthwhile going into."⁵⁴⁶

Panofsky was indeed keen to be involved. In 1942 he mentioned to Fritz Saxl that he was already doing some "Civil Defense Work."⁵⁴⁷ And the next year he informed his old friend that, although he did not want to go to Washington for a 'desk job', he was keen to use his language skills to secure a position overseas:

*"I should, seriously, like to go someplace like Africa or Syria where I could come in touch with things instead of paper and could use my languages and, perhaps, my lack of interest in living on forever."*⁵⁴⁸

With this aim Panofsky travelled to Washington in 1943, for interview and examination. However, he was adjudged to be too old for this kind of work.⁵⁴⁹ Panofsky was at this point 51 years old, and despite continued efforts to enlist for overseas service, he remained unsuccessful. Panofsky does seem to have been genuinely disappointed that he was unable to contribute in this way.⁵⁵⁰ For the remainder of the War he stayed in Princeton, preparing maps and lists of information about cultural monuments in Germany for use by the United States Army.⁵⁵¹ He also volunteered for *The Committee on the Protection of Cultural Treasures in War Areas*, an organisation funded by the Rockefeller Foundation and made up of some of the most renowned art scholars in the world.⁵⁵² From its headquarters at the Frick Art Reference Library in New York, Panofsky helped compile a master index of all notable artworks that remained within occupied territories.

⁵⁴⁴ See R.M. Edsel, *The Monuments Men: Allied Heroes, Nazi Thieves, and the Greatest Treasure Hunt in History*, 2010.

⁵⁴⁵ Krautheimer to Panofsky, May 30th, 1943 (AAA).

⁵⁴⁶ Ibid.

⁵⁴⁷ Panofsky to Saxl, May 9th, 1942 (861) & October 17th, 1942 (881).

⁵⁴⁸ Panofsky to Saxl, May 21st, 1943 (898).

⁵⁴⁹ Panofsky to Elizabeth Mongan, April 25th, 1943 (897).

⁵⁵⁰ Panofsky to Saxl, December 14th, 1943 (922).

⁵⁵¹ E. Regis, *Who Got Einstein's Office?: Eccentricity and Genius at the Institute for Advanced Study*, 1987, p127.

⁵⁵² <http://www.monumentsmen.com/acls.php>. Date accessed, March 17th, 2013.

Remaining difficulties of acculturation for the émigré scholar

In spite of, or perhaps indeed because of the fact that Panofsky had committed so wholeheartedly to American life, he remained, even into the 1940s, extremely attentive to the dangers of being perceived in any way as a foreigner or 'outsider'. He remained deeply concerned, for example, by the anti-Semitism he encountered within American society. In the lead up to the Presidential election of 1944 Panofsky informed Betty Trotter (a friend known through Booth Tarkington) how he and Dora were,

*"...both very much excited and, frankly, distracted by the turn the [Presidential] Campaign has taken. You will hardly know it, but the head of the Republican Committee of Pennsylvania has seen fit to distribute millions of violently anti-Semitic pamphlets in this neighbourhood, and the slogan 'Well, these boys will cease to be this way after the election' did not work so very well in Germany."*⁵⁵³

Trotter and Tarkington moved swiftly to assuage their friends' concerns.⁵⁵⁴ However, the Panofskys remained understandably perturbed by such flare-ups. The possibility that anti-Semitism could pose a real danger in political terms remained a genuine concern for many Jewish exiles from Nazi Germany. In 1944, for example, Panofsky wrote to Margaret Barr with mock resignation, "...next year all our troubles will have been solved by the more and more inevitable Hitlerism in this country."⁵⁵⁵ These political undercurrents only sharpened Panofsky's sensitivity to any potential threat to his 'American' status.

Panofsky had established a reliable network of friends and colleagues within American academia. However, he remained conscious that a significant anti-émigré sentiment endured within some quarters, even years after the end of the War. Panofsky was certainly apprised of this when Richard Krautheimer enlisted his help in an attempt to secure a place for the noted German philologist Erich Auerbach. Auerbach had been living in Istanbul during the War but moved to America in 1947, to take up a temporary place at Pennsylvania State College.⁵⁵⁶ At the beginning of 1949 Krautheimer informed Panofsky,

"It seems likely that the College will terminate [Auerbach's] contract as of this summer. Obviously he is in a very tight spot...I am trying my best here [at Vassar] but it's a rather difficult proposition since as you possibly know Colleges are rarely keen

⁵⁵³ Panofsky to Betty Trotter, November 1st, 1944 (962).

⁵⁵⁴ Tarkington to Panofsky, November 5th, 1944, in Ludwig, *Dr Panofsky and Mr Tarkington*, op. cit., p44.

⁵⁵⁵ Panofsky to Margaret Barr, May 2nd, 1944 (939).

⁵⁵⁶ For an analysis of Auerbach's American career, see D. Damrosch, 'Auerbach in Exile', *Comparative Literature*, 47:2, spring 1995, pp97-117.

on scholars in the language field but prefer teachers...who must be native and must not be interested in Philology or in history of Literature."⁵⁵⁷

Panofsky managed to secure Auerbach a temporary placement at the IAS, but informed Krautheimer,

*"[P]lease try to prevent the wrong conclusions to the effect that he is being taken care of for good, and do not relax in your efforts to find something for him on a more permanent basis."*⁵⁵⁸

Krautheimer wrote in return,

*"I fully understand that this is not a permanent solution and that he has to try just as hard as before to find something permanent. Of course I also shall do what I can. But here, unfortunately, the department is very anti-German, plus anti-refugee."*⁵⁵⁹

The same month, Hanns Swarzenski informed Panofsky that he was to end his long association at the IAS in order to take up employment in a major American museum. As Panofsky wrote to his friend,

*"It is a tremendous distinction for an emigrant scholar to be offered a permanent position at an American museum of the rank of the Museum of Fine Arts at Boston...Thus my feeling of sadness [at your leaving the IAS] is tempered by a certain elation on your behalf, and congratulations are in order."*⁵⁶⁰

Such was the enduring anti-émigré sentiment in America that even as late as 1955 Panofsky would note that William Ivins, an American scholar whom he had known since his first visit to the United States, retained "a curious prejudice against European, especially German, scholarship."⁵⁶¹

Panofsky also remained alert to the kind of typecasting that lingered long within American academia, as well as the fact that many American colleagues remained decidedly opposed to any undue émigré influence within the American University. In approaching one American friend with the aim of finding employment for the art historian Axel von Saldern, for example, Panofsky was quick to point out that this young German scholar was,

*"...quite free from the customary arrogance of many Europeans who believe that they cannot live anywhere except in New York, Princeton or Cambridge, and hate to devote their superior intelligence to comparatively menial tasks."*⁵⁶²

⁵⁵⁷ Krautheimer to Panofsky, February 11th, 1949 (AAA).

⁵⁵⁸ Panofsky to Krautheimer, April 18th, 1949 (1309).

⁵⁵⁹ Krautheimer to Panofsky, April 21st, 1949 (AAA).

⁵⁶⁰ Panofsky to Hanns Swarzenski, April 4th, 1949 (1307).

⁵⁶¹ Panofsky to John White, January 11th, 1955 (1744).

⁵⁶² Panofsky to George H. Forsyth, April 21st, 1953 (1599a).

Nonetheless, Panofsky's correspondent on this occasion, the architectural historian George H. Forsyth, felt compelled to point out,

*"...there are hosts of American trained scholars who pass their whole lives in quiet yearning for the research centers of this country. And...it would ultimately be fatal to the fruitful growth of these centers if they came to be regarded as consolidated enclaves of European thought and methods. We in this country have our own creative spirit and distinctive character which seeks outlet in scholarship as well as in art."*⁵⁶³

Panofsky's awareness of such sentiment helps explain why he continued to exhibit a certain reticence in regards to making himself too conspicuous within the American learning environment. Though he was increasingly feted by his American colleagues, Panofsky was always extremely cautious about putting himself forward for any prominent position. In 1949, for example, Julius Held asked Panofsky to take the leading role in preparing a *Festschrift* for their fellow émigré Hans Tietze. Panofsky certainly admired the scholarship of Tietze and replied that he would be "most ready to participate", however, he insisted, "not as the head of the group, however honourable such a role may be." Indeed, Panofsky advised Held instead that, "it would be quite wise to have an American rather than an immigrant scholar at the head of the group", and to this end he suggested his American friend Fiske Kimball.⁵⁶⁴ Though he was, undoubtedly, gratified by the recognition and reputation he enjoyed in America Panofsky shied away from anything that could in any way be interpreted as unabashed self-promotion. When offered a prominent position outside of the United States in 1948, for example, Panofsky informed one correspondent,

*"I am really not suitable for a directorship of any kind...Even in this country, where I know a good many people in all sorts of places and all walks of life, I should never accept an executive position."*⁵⁶⁵

It was this self-aware and considered approach that enabled Panofsky to enact the acculturation process so smoothly and successfully. Panofsky's great boon had been that, from an early point, he was acutely attuned to how the émigrés were perceived by their American colleagues. Even into the 1940s and 50s Panofsky remained cognisant of the need for a *continued* process of mutual acculturation. Indeed, this was one of the primary reasons that he did enjoy such repute among American associates.

Panofsky was mindful that many of those émigrés who continued to experience difficulty after the War had *themselves* proven either unwilling, or unable to adapt to their new environment. The case

⁵⁶³ George H. Forsyth to Panofsky, April 29th, 1953 (AAA).

⁵⁶⁴ Panofsky to Julius Held, September 27th, 1949 (1328).

⁵⁶⁵ Panofsky to Gertrud Bing, June 17th, 1948 (1228).

of Hans Baron, a promising young Renaissance scholar in Germany who was forced to retrain as a librarian in America has already been mentioned. Alexander Dorner was another who continued to struggle in America.⁵⁶⁶ Panofsky made extensive efforts to help this former classmate establish himself.⁵⁶⁷ However, he remained well aware that Dorner's attitude was in itself a hindrance to his acculturation; an attitude summed up in Dorner's pronouncement, the year before his death, that, "The Americans have not yet reached the European mental faculties, yes, they are about to drop even further."⁵⁶⁸

The case of Richard Hertz is particularly instructive in terms of Panofsky's understanding of the problems faced by émigré scholars in America after the War. Hertz had been a student of Panofsky in Hamburg, and had left Germany for America in 1937. After ten years of irregular employment, Hertz contacted Panofsky to see if his former teacher could help him secure some academic work. Panofsky duly circulated Hertz's CV around various American universities and he also involved Frank Aydelotte, by then the Director of the IAS, in the hope that something could be done for this young émigré.⁵⁶⁹ Eventually, in the summer of 1947, Hertz was awarded a year-long Guggenheim Fellowship, to enable him to complete the book on which he was working, and he moved to California with his family to do so.⁵⁷⁰

When the Guggenheim money was exhausted Hertz contacted Aydelotte directly with a renewed plea for help. In a rather haughty letter Hertz explained to this prospective American employer that, although he had now been in the United States for over ten years, he had not been able to establish any academic contacts, due to the fact that he had been,

"...unduly preoccupied with the evolving of an original philosophical vista. The building up of a coherent world picture – essentially idealism in a modern dress – on the debris of past illusions. I have found an absorbing task, to charge it with the vitality and conviction that will eventually communicate it to others requires concentration, and thus I have neglected grievously the promotion of the outward fortunes of my career as a scholar. I am very uncertain about the response my intentions have so far found among Americans interested in the unattached spirit."⁵⁷¹

The CV sent by Hertz to Aydelotte employed an even more abstruse terminology:

⁵⁶⁶ Katenhusen, *Alexander Dorner*, op. cit., p12.

⁵⁶⁷ Panofsky to John White, March 8th, 1937 (615); Walter W.S. Cook to Panofsky, September 15th, 1937 (657); John Nicholas Brown to Erwin Panofsky, December 13th, 1937 (683).

⁵⁶⁸ Quoted in Katenhusen, op. cit., p12.

⁵⁶⁹ Panofsky to Richard Hertz, January 28th, 1947 (AAA).

⁵⁷⁰ Hertz believed he owed the award of this Guggenheim Fellowship to Panofsky. Richard Hertz to Erwin Panofsky, April 25th, 1947 (AAA).

⁵⁷¹ Richard Hertz to Frank Aydelotte, August 7th, 1948 (AAA).

“A great variety of experiences and interests could not fail to make the basis for my intellectual background as comprehensive as possible. In a sense the interconnection of different fields of study through a sufficiently profound common denominator has become my ‘speciality’. Through a laborious perusal of scientific, religious and belletristic literature of a thoroughly cosmopolitan origin and character I had occasion to build up something like a mental overall picture that is fitted as closely as possible to the present world situation; this acquisition permits, if nothing else, at least to assign to old and new material, as it enters the ken, an appropriate niche in an organic whole.”⁵⁷²

One can but imagine Aydelotte’s thoughts on having read this rather hyperbolic résumé.

A few months later Hertz wrote again to Panofsky, describing how he had been forced to take on work in a Fontana steel mill to support his young family, and finally despairing,

“All my hopes to find even the most modest teaching position...proved vain. Nobody was in the least interested to help me...I have left ‘Kaiser Steel’ now after ten months and am trying desperately to find some sort of intellectual job – any kind. Right now I have nothing. I cannot understand why I should be so entirely out of luck...Why should I be denied the opportunity to finish my book on the Theory of Value, as if Theory of Value were a sin?”⁵⁷³

Hertz’s recondite language and phraseology, combined with his rather pompous sense of indignation suggests he may well have been identified by American academics as one of those supercilious émigré intellectuals that were so hard to work with. That Hertz was not the most appealing prospect for any American university is borne out by a later letter sent to Panofsky, in which the young émigré complained,

“My incompatibility with the American academic outfit is not factual but circumstantial, as it were...[W]hatever I tried I was told, ‘Yes, but the Germans are always trying to be fundamental. We are a practical people, and our students must make a living. All that depth has no place in American education.’ In reality I am not particularly ‘deep’, as you well know...but how can I convince these people here? So I am trapped in a maze of misconceptions, misunderstandings and prejudices.”⁵⁷⁴

Panofsky was concerned for this young man and his family and he did try to help by speaking to Aydelotte once again. However, he was forced to inform Hertz that Aydelotte had “written to several quarters on your behalf but as yet, to his great disappointment, has had no favourable response.”⁵⁷⁵ The older scholar obviously recognised that Hertz’s intellectual attitude, and his

⁵⁷² An undated copy of Hertz’s CV is included in the Richard Hertz section of the Panofsky Archive (AAA).

⁵⁷³ Hertz to Panofsky, December 8th, 1948 (AAA).

⁵⁷⁴ Hertz to Panofsky, December 16th, 1948 (1265).

⁵⁷⁵ Panofsky to Hertz, December 14th, 1948 (1263).

inability to *acculturate* in this sense, had proven an insurmountable barrier to his gaining employment in America. And, although he sympathised with the undoubted predicament of this one-time student, Panofsky eventually felt compelled to write to Hertz,

*"I am at a loss as to what to advise you. If you will allow me to talk to you quite frankly and as an older man, I should say this. If you, with your intelligence, your social advantages, and your attractive personality, have not succeeded in establishing yourself in the academic life of this country, there must be some inherent incompatibility between your nature and the structure of academic life in America; and I wonder whether you might not consider returning to Germany...in your case a return to the Old Country might be a benefit to the Germans of good will as well as to yourself."*⁵⁷⁶

Panofsky then furnished Hertz with the names of three men whom he could contact with a view to securing employment in the country of his birth. Hertz, in response, told his former teacher, "To go back to Germany is all I want."⁵⁷⁷

Panofsky's final advice to this Hertz reaffirms the extent to which he understood that process of intellectual acculturation and adaptation required of the German émigré scholar in America. Indeed, the experience of Hertz throws into sharp relief Panofsky's own approach to life in the United States. Panofsky had worked hard to establish open, productive and communicative relationships with American colleagues, and the American people at large. He had tailored the conceptual framework of his approach to art scholarship in order that it be more easily digestible for an American audience; and he had presented his work, as much as was possible, in straightforward English and a readily understandable terminology. Ultimately, Panofsky's success was predicated upon his genuine commitment to academic life in the United States

Continued commitment

A marker of Panofsky's continued commitment to life in America came when he was offered the position of Director at the Warburg Institute in London, following the death of Fritz Saxl. Edna Purdie, a professor of German at the University of London, and Chairman of the Committee of Management of the Warburg Institute, wrote to Panofsky in the June of 1948 to inform him that he had been the Committee's unanimous choice. Purdie also made it known to Panofsky that the staff

⁵⁷⁶ Ibid.

⁵⁷⁷ Hertz to Panofsky, December 16th, 1948 (1265).

at the Institute would warmly welcome his appointment.⁵⁷⁸ This was confirmed when Gertrud Bing wrote to “add a few personal words to professor Purdie’s letter.” As Bing informed Panofsky,

“You are the only person alive whose name as a scholar would add a completely harmonious note to those of Warburg and Saxl...Not only that – even if we could think of another man of equal stature, there is no-one who would be able to carry on the tradition for which the Institute stands as well as you, because you have for many years helped to build it up. If you came back to us it would be like a return home.”⁵⁷⁹

Bing then wrote of the staff at the Institute,

“You may be assured that they would all work under you as loyally as they worked under Saxl, that not one of them would doubt your supreme competence for the job and that they would all feel that they can learn a lot from you.”⁵⁸⁰

The lure of the Warburg job must have been great indeed; and Panofsky was thus faced with a difficult decision. As has been noted, Panofsky had been desperate to be placed with the Institute in London when first forced to seek employment outside of Germany. The resources and the ‘humanistic’ outlook of Warburg’s Institute were particularly suited to Panofsky’s vision of scholarship. He was now being offered the chance to lead the very Institute that had so fundamentally shaped his approach to the study of art and culture. Panofsky had to measure this opportunity against his position of influence at the IAS, and the inroads he and his fellow émigrés were making in establishing the history of art within the American university. For one usually so prompt in the return of correspondence, Panofsky took a long time to reply to these letters from London. Eventually, Panofsky stated in a heartfelt, personal response to Bing,

“Your letter...has confronted me with what is, perhaps, the most difficult decision in my life, and it has taken me several days to make up my mind; I hope you will understand and forgive the delay.”⁵⁸¹

Panofsky assured his erstwhile colleague just how honoured he was to have been invited to succeed Saxl, and of course Warburg, in leading the Institute. Ultimately though, he turned down this extremely tempting offer. Panofsky had expended a considerable amount of energy on the acculturation process on his side of the Atlantic, and he remained committed to establishing himself and his discipline in the country that had first offered him refuge from persecution. As he informed Gertrud Bing,

⁵⁷⁸ Edna Purdie to Panofsky, June 7th, 1948 (1222).

⁵⁷⁹ Gertrud Bing to Panofsky, June 8th, 1948 (1223).

⁵⁸⁰ Ibid.

⁵⁸¹ Panofsky to Gertrud Bing, June 17th, 1948 (1228).

*"I feel a certain responsibility for the development of the history of art in the United States and that two changes of environment and nationality are perhaps too much for one life-time."*⁵⁸²

The History of Art within the American University

Despite a lingering anti-émigré sentiment, the history of art did become more fully established within the American university in the years following the end of the War, and this largely under the influence of the German émigré scholars. The period following 1945 is generally recognised as the 'Golden Age' of the American university.⁵⁸³ American academia had contributed effectively to the war effort, and, with the country then emerging as the preeminent power on the world stage, many educators believed they had an important social role to play in "training leaders, forming attitudes and advancing knowledge."⁵⁸⁴ Opening up to an increasing number of students, and rejuvenated by the influx of new students returning home from war, American University programmes developed rapidly, in all areas, after 1945. With more Liberal Arts Colleges providing courses on the history of art, more teaching posts became available, and there was, on the whole, less competition and conflict for the émigré art historian within the university job market. It was in this period that the influence of the émigré art historians really began to tell.⁵⁸⁵

Panofsky was undoubtedly the preeminent figure in this newly developing *American* art history. He was widely recognised as such both by his many American friends and colleagues, and by his fellow émigrés, many of whom he had helped find a place within the American university. Panofsky was hugely gratified by the recognition and status he had begun to enjoy in America. When he received word he was to be made a member of the *American Philosophical Society*, ten years after he first visited America, the émigré scholar wrote,

*"What naturally gratifies me most is, of course, the feeling that I, as a newcomer, have been accepted by a society which not only embodies the best of eighteenth-century humanism (and humanity), but is also one of the most typically and admirably American institutions."*⁵⁸⁶

⁵⁸² Ibid.

⁵⁸³ See, for example, R. Freeland, *Academia's Golden Age: Universities in Massachusetts, 1945-1970*, 1992; R.L. Geiger, *Research and Relevant Knowledge: American Research Universities Since World War II*, 1993 & C. Kerr, *The Uses of the University* (4th ed.), 1997, esp. chapter 6.

⁵⁸⁴ Freeland, *Academia's Golden Age*, *ibid.*, p71.

⁵⁸⁵ For details on the expansion of courses in art history during this period see, R. Goldwater, *The Teaching of Art in the Colleges of the United States*, *op. cit.*, especially p19-20.

⁵⁸⁶ Panofsky to Frank Aydelotte, April 24th, 1943 (896).

Recognition from other American institutions soon followed. Panofsky was elected a 'Fellow' of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences in 1948, and in the years following the end of the War he received Honorary Doctorates from Princeton University (1947); Northwestern University (1949) and Oberlin College (1950). In the late forties and early fifties Panofsky worked for extended periods at both Harvard and Yale; and, with his regular work at the University of Princeton, he joked to friends and family that he was going to have calling cards made up, inscribed with the legend, "E.P. Ivy League Art historian."⁵⁸⁷ Discussing with Richard Krautheimer this increased recognition and the award of his honorary doctorate from Princeton, Panofsky wrote,

*"Needless to say, I was pleased; yet I cannot help feeling that this unexpected shower of honours is a little too much...As Charlie Chan so wisely says: 'if you are on a pedestal, there is no place to go but off'."*⁵⁸⁸

Krautheimer countered his friend's self-deprecation with the telling remark,

*"Don't be bashful about it: it is an honour you have certainly deserved and all of us refugee art historians are bathing in the reflected glory."*⁵⁸⁹

Early Netherlandish Painting: Its Origins and Character (1953)

In January 1947 Panofsky accepted the invitation from Harvard University to assume the Charles Eliot Norton Chair of Poetry for the academic year 1947-8.⁵⁹⁰ The position required him to provide a series of lectures at Harvard, over two terms, which would be open to the general public as well as Harvard's students and faculty. The Norton Lectures were to be on an original topic, as publication was required, and it was from this commission that Panofsky's next major American publication developed: *Early Netherlandish Painting: Its Origins and Character*.

The Norton Chair was an immensely prestigious commission, especially for an émigré scholar. It was described by Panofsky as, "the greatest distinction that can be conferred upon a scholar in my field." And the "not inconsiderable financial benefits" also held an obvious appeal.⁵⁹¹ Charles Eliot Norton had been the foremost figure in the early history of American art scholarship, and the Chair that held his name required an eight month residency at the oldest institution of higher learning in the United States. Panofsky was accorded the status of a full Harvard Professor for the duration of this incumbency, and a large exhibition of Flemish artworks and illuminated manuscripts was arranged at

⁵⁸⁷ Panofsky to Wolfgang Panofsky, September 26th, 1950 (1395).

⁵⁸⁸ Panofsky to Krautheimer, April 17th, 1947 (1149).

⁵⁸⁹ Krautheimer to Panofsky, April 14th, 1947 (AAA).

⁵⁹⁰ Panofsky to Paul Herman Buck, January 25th, 1947 (1126).

⁵⁹¹ Panofsky to Ralph M. Blake, January 30th, 1947 (1127).

the Fogg Museum of Art to complement his lectures and to provide material for his seminars with Harvard's more advanced graduate students.⁵⁹²

The Harvard Professorship brought with it a renewed sense of accomplishment and recognition for Panofsky in America. This feeling of achievement is most evident in the letters that emanated from the Panofsky household in the weeks following the initial invitation. In a letter to her son Wolfgang, Dora Panofsky wrote,

*"Well, in our life something exciting has happened...Papi has got the Charles Eliot Norton professorship in Cambridge Mass. That is a great honour, the nearest to a Nobel Prize in our field in this country. So from next October to May we will be in Boston, rent our house, loose Emma [the maid], and so we shall start a 'Vita Nuova' and, wonderful to say, hope to have some more money and be able to contribute a little to your house."*⁵⁹³

Adding his own postscript, Panofsky, with customary self-deprecation, informed Wolfgang that his mother's estimation of the Norton Professorship was "somewhat exaggerated"; although he was moved to admit,

*"...it is a nice and, in a sense, fantastic thing...Thus far, only millionaires or titled Englishmen have received this colossal plum...and I still don't know how a harmless, elderly Jew, normally walking about the fields with his dog, can live up to the established standards."*⁵⁹⁴

Panofsky was granted a leave of absence from the IAS "on half pay",⁵⁹⁵ and in the September of 1947 he and Dora, armed with a small arsenal of books and photographs, decamped to Cambridge, Massachusetts, where they took up residence for eight months in the Continental Hotel.⁵⁹⁶ It is clear that the Panofskys enjoyed their Harvard experience immensely.⁵⁹⁷ They entertained students in their expansive hotel room regularly, and one participant's recollection of those "delightful parties"⁵⁹⁸ suggests that the hosts were able to foster with the Harvard students the kind of informal, amiable relations for which they had been known during their time in Hamburg.⁵⁹⁹ The Panofskys seem to have particularly appreciated the liberal atmosphere that prevailed at Harvard. As Panofsky wrote to Saxl from Cambridge,

⁵⁹² Panofsky to Frederick B. Deknatel, May 12th, 1947 (1160).

⁵⁹³ Dora and Erwin Panofsky to Wolfgang and Adèle Panofsky, February 11th, 1947 (1132).

⁵⁹⁴ Ibid.

⁵⁹⁵ Panofsky to Frank Aydelotte, February 7th, 1947 (1131).

⁵⁹⁶ Panofsky to Mildred Burrage, February 13th, 1947 (1133).

⁵⁹⁷ Panofsky to Saxl, March 22nd, 1948 (1201).

⁵⁹⁸ Kjell Boström to Erwin and Dora Panosky, June 26th, 1948 (1232).

⁵⁹⁹ E. J. Levine, *Culture, Commerce and the City*, op. cit., p230.

*"We shudder at the thought of returning to Princeton. Harvard is so much greater and all shades of opinion, even our own, are represented. In Princeton we shall be pretty much alone for the next few years."*⁶⁰⁰

Panofsky ended this letter by quoting Albrecht Dürer's famous statement regarding the prospect of a return to Nuremberg from Italy, "*Wie wird mich nach der Sonnen frieren.*"⁶⁰¹ This was a knowing reference for two men who had worked so closely together on *Dürer probleme* in Hamburg; and it sheds significant light on the Panofskys' estimation of the Princeton environment in which they lived. Harvard University had a significant tradition of Germanic studies dating back to the end of the nineteenth century, when the German scholar Kuno Francke had lectured there on German literature and culture. In the late forties Harvard had a thriving German Literature department and the University's Busch-Reisinger Museum boasted the only North American collection devoted entirely to Germanic art. Moreover, Kathryn Brush has demonstrated how Harvard was, in the mid twentieth century an unusually cosmopolitan and pluralistic institution.⁶⁰² Many members of Manhattan's German-Jewish business community had studied at Harvard in the early twentieth century (Paul and Felix Warburg being prominent examples), and their continued influence through patronage and benefaction ensured that Harvard, in comparison to most other Ivy League institutions, maintained a remarkably liberal and broad-based identity. Panofsky's comments to Saxl suggest that, besides his position at the IAS, and his close relationships with Morey, both he and Dora seem to have considered their 'home town' stiflingly conservative, both politically and socially.⁶⁰³ This acts as a valuable corrective to the rather facile assumption that Panofsky was simply an 'exile in paradise' within the IAS. It certainly demonstrates that both he and Dora continued to feel quite conspicuous, as two German Jewish émigrés, in the more 'traditionalist' surrounds of Princeton, New Jersey.



5. Panofsky in Harvard, 1947.

⁶⁰⁰ Panofsky to Saxl, March 22nd, 1948 (1201).

⁶⁰¹ Ibid.

⁶⁰² *Adolph Goldschmidt in the 'Wilds' of 1920s America*, op. cit., p192, n.28.

⁶⁰³ For this, see also, Panofsky to Tarkington, November 11th, 1944 (966).

There can be no doubt that Panofsky's employers at Harvard considered his lecture course and his time at the University in general, to be a remarkable success. As Frederick Deknatel of Harvard's Department of Fine Arts wrote to the then Director of the IAS, J. Robert Oppenheimer,

*"Professor Panofsky not only gave us a brilliant series of lectures which will be an important and permanent contribution to knowledge in our field when they are published, but also his enthusiasm and skill as a teacher made a deep impression and stimulated not only our advanced graduate students but all of us as well. We all came to feel that professor Panofsky is one of the most gifted and one of the most effective people in our profession. It was with great regret that we saw him return to Princeton."*⁶⁰⁴

As Deknatel's letter suggests Panofsky's reputation in America was now well-established. Despite the double irony, that Charles Eliot Norton was famed for his dislike of 'Teutonic' scholarship, and that this was a Chair of 'Poetry' as opposed to art history, the high-status award of the Norton Professorship, and Panofsky's accomplished performance therein, situated this émigré scholar as *the* major figure in American art history. In the wider context too, it provided ample testament to the increasing acceptance of émigré influence on the development of the discipline in the United States.

Fittingly for such a prestigious 'American' commission, Panofsky's Norton Lectures, and the book that developed from them, would be his first on a subject the research for which had been carried out almost exclusively during his time in the United States. In 1936 Panofsky travelled to Europe for over three months researching the "origins of Early Flemish and fifteenth-century German paintings on the basis of the illuminated manuscripts preserved in the libraries and museums in...Utrecht, The Hague, Leiden, Haarlem...Brussels...Paris, Tours, Bordeaux, Toulouse...."⁶⁰⁵ Panofsky was also able to carry out a great deal of research on this subject on American soil, utilising the large number of illuminated manuscripts and Flemish paintings held in collections on the East Coast. Private libraries and major museums and galleries in the United States had, since the turn of the century, amassed collections of early Netherlandish art and related material that were unmatched even in Europe.⁶⁰⁶ Panofsky makes regular reference to such primary source material throughout *Early Netherlandish*

⁶⁰⁴ Frederick B. Deknatel to J. Robert Oppenheimer, June 19th, 1948 (1230).

⁶⁰⁵ This quotation is taken from Panofsky's application for a \$1,000 travel grant from the IAS. Panofsky's application, including the itinerary for his trip, is included in D. Wuttke, *Erwin Panofsky: Korrespondenz*, Band I, 2001, p908. See also, Panofsky to Abraham Flexner, August 28th, 1936 (586).

⁶⁰⁶ See T. Borchert, 'Collecting Early Netherlandish Painting in Europe and the United States', in *Early Netherlandish Paintings: Rediscovery, Reception and Research*, B. Ridderbos et al. (eds.), 2005, pp173-217; esp. p204ff.

Painting, and it is obvious from the detailed descriptions and stylistic criticism provided that the émigré scholar had examined a huge number of these works first hand.⁶⁰⁷

Panofsky also taught regularly on this subject throughout the thirties and early forties, developing his ideas on early Netherlandish art in lectures and seminars with advanced students, and holding fast to that *wissenschaftliche* ideal of the unity of teaching and research.⁶⁰⁸ He also published a number of important articles on the subject before *Early Netherlandish Painting* eventually appeared in 1953.⁶⁰⁹ Panofsky had planned to publish a large-scale book on this topic, and one of the reasons he was so pleased with the Norton invitation was that it provided “the opportunity of printing my book on the *Character and Origins of Early Flemish Painting* without the usual worries about subsidies etc.”⁶¹⁰ Once again, what would become a large-scale, comprehensive textbook was actually predicated upon an enormous wealth of previous scholarship and primary research, as well as detailed analyses of particular ‘problems’.

In the early part of the twentieth century early Netherlandish or ‘Flemish’ painting was a relatively nascent field of art-historical research, a *terra ambiguus*, as it were, especially in comparison to the art of the Italian Renaissance.⁶¹¹ The *Primitifs flamands* - artists such as Jan and Hubert van Eyck, Roger van der Weyden, Hans Memling, and Gerard David - were certainly recognised names, but there was little consensus as to their place within the history of art. Were they medieval artists for example, whose work was a manifestation of late medieval culture? Or did their intense skills of naturalistic depiction indicate a new beginning in northern artistic production?⁶¹² In the early decades of the twentieth century, central European scholars such as Max Dvořák, Georges Hulin de Loo and, above all, Max J. Friedländer, had done much to advance the field through detailed stylistic

⁶⁰⁷ For the range of primary source material used by Panofsky in America, see *Early Netherlandish Painting*, ‘Bibliography: II. Collections and Exhibitions’, pp533-535.

⁶⁰⁸ Panofsky provided seminar courses on ‘Early Dutch and Flemish Painting’ for both NYU and Princeton University throughout the 1930s. In 1935, he delivered 15 lectures on ‘Gothic and Late Medieval Illuminated Manuscripts’ at the Pierpont Morgan Library in New York (in cooperation with NYU’s Department of Fine Arts Graduate School). See, D. Wuttke, *Erwin Panofsky: Korrespondenz*, Band I, 2001, p806. Panofsky also lectured on his early Flemish material at the University of Illinois in 1942. See, Panofsky to G.H.A. Clowes, October 20th, 1942 (883).

⁶⁰⁹ See for example, ‘Jan van Eyck’s Arnolfini Portrait’, *Burlington Magazine*, 64:372, March 1934, pp117-119 & 122-127; ‘The Friedsam Annunciation and the Problem of the Ghent Altarpiece’, *Art Bulletin*, 17:4, December 1935, pp432-473. For Panofsky’s other publications related to this topic, see Bibliography.

⁶¹⁰ Panofsky to Frank Aydelotte, February 7th, 1947 (1131).

⁶¹¹ The blossoming of interest in Flemish art can be traced to an influential exhibition held in Bruges in 1902. For details of the exhibition and its influence, see F. Haskell, *History and Its Images: Art and the Interpretation of the Past*, 1993, p445-468.

⁶¹² For an informative analysis of the historiography concerning Netherlandish art see, *Early Netherlandish Paintings: Rediscovery, Reception and Research*, op. cit., esp. pp218-289.

analysis, connoisseurship, and archival research.⁶¹³ This work was then supplemented by that of Panofsky and his generation in the early thirties and forties.⁶¹⁴ These contributions however, were most often detailed examinations of specific ‘problems’, and when Panofsky began writing *Early Netherlandish Painting* the field remained a morass of individual opinion, characterised by major, and often heated, debates as to questions of chronology, artistic influence, attribution and even artistic identity.⁶¹⁵

With *Early Netherlandish Painting: Its Origins and Character* Panofsky attempted to provide a comprehensive examination of the art of the great Flemish painters of the fifteenth-century, set firmly within a historical context. The book was, at one and the same time, an introduction to the subject and a survey of the existent scholarship. Panofsky opened his account with an extensive examination of the panel painting, book illumination and sculpture of the fourteenth-century; detailing, over four full chapters, the iconographic and stylistic traditions, and the socio-cultural context that would inform the work of the 15th-century masters. Of these, Roger van der Weyden and Jan van Eyck were considered the most important, and each is afforded their own full chapter. Panofsky provided detailed analyses of the particular style of each of these artists, and this laid the ground for his authoritative attributions and pronouncement on the extent and character of their individual oeuvres. Analysis of the pertinent historical evidence is also woven throughout these chapters, and both Roger and Jan are materialised as tangible historical personalities. Jan Van Eyck in particular emerges from Panofsky’s text as *the* major figure in the history of early Netherlandish painting.

Nor did Panofsky shy away from the more ‘thorny’ issues that characterised early Netherlandish scholarship. In a chapter entitled ‘*Ars Nova; The Master of Flémalle*’ he provided an account of the involved historiography concerning the identity of this particular painter; before declaring in favour of the hypothesis that this artist and Robert Campin were one and the same person. Panofsky then constructed his own interpretation of this artist’s *oeuvre*, before situating it within the new naturalistic style of the fifteenth-century. In a separate chapter Panofsky grappled with the even more contentious issues surrounding the apportioning of the hands involved with the Ghent Altarpiece, and the artistic identity of ‘Hubert and/or Jan van Eyck’. In this admittedly speculative chapter Panofsky proposed the tentative theory that this great altarpiece began life as three

⁶¹³ The seminal contribution in this context was undoubtedly Friedländer’s 14-volume corpus, *Die altniederländische Malerei*, 1924-37.

⁶¹⁴ Notable figures of this generation included Hermann Beenken, Ludwig von Baldass, Otto Pächt, Charles de Tolnay and Meyer Schapiro.

⁶¹⁵ In the 1930s, for example, Panofsky and Beenken conducted a fierce debate over the authorship of the Ghent Altarpiece. For details see, ‘Hermann Beenken’, in *The Dictionary of Art Historians*, <http://www.dictionaryofarthistorians.org/beenkenh.htm>, accessed, April, 17th, 2013.

unrelated (and not altogether finished) panel paintings by Hubert; and that upon Hubert's death Jan incorporated these works into his own construction of a much larger altarpiece. Besides relegating Hubert to a relatively insignificant role in the history of western art, this chapter is perhaps most notable for the use Panofsky made of findings from the technical examination of the Ghent altarpiece carried out at the *Brussels Laboratoire Central* in the late forties and early fifties. Panofsky had developed a close professional and personal relationship with Paul Coremans, the Director of this innovative scientific laboratory, and he was able to utilise the findings of his Belgian friend to give greater substance to his own attributions and theories in *Early Netherlandish Painting*.⁶¹⁶

As well as the two full chapters devoted to the analysis of these contentious matters of attribution, Panofsky passed judgement regularly, and with ready assurance, on a wide range of 'problematic' issues and works. Indeed, one of the most notable features of Panofsky's substantial book is the extent and the level of his skills of connoisseurship. As one specialist reviewer noted,

...to those critics who tend to think that 'iconologists' have little interest in, and less talent for, questions of authenticity and attribution, this book must come as something of a shock. Panofsky's batting average, it seems to me, might well be envied by 'professional' connoisseurs.⁶¹⁷

This was no narrowly 'iconographical' approach then. Indeed, Panofsky provides his reader with detailed stylistic descriptions of many individual paintings, and these analyses, informed by his comprehensive iconographical research, give an authority to his pronouncements on questions of authenticity and authorship. Such fastidious attention to detail, and to the artworks themselves, provided the solid groundwork upon which Panofsky constructed his account of the artistic development and 'progression' of early Netherlandish painting.

Panofsky's account does not end with the achievement of Jan van Eyck and Roger van der Weyden. In a final *Epilogue*, entitled 'The Heritage of the Founders', he demonstrated how the influence of the great Flemish masters of the early fourteen-hundreds was gradually disseminated, over the remainder of the century and throughout northern Europe, in the work of artists such as Conrad

⁶¹⁶ Panofsky actually travelled to Brussels in August 1952 whereupon he was able to witness first-hand the technical examination of the Ghent Altarpiece. For Panofsky's gratitude to Coremans, see *Early Netherlandish Painting*, pviii & p535. Even after *Early Netherlandish Painting* was published, Panofsky remained involved with the on-going technical examinations of the Ghent Altarpiece. He travelled to Belgium again in 1954, to take part with Coremans in the *Brussels Art Seminar*, and what they referred to jovially as 'Moutonnements'. Panofsky to Paul Coremans, April 6th, 1954 (1688a). For a breakdown of the activities of this *Brussels Seminar*, and its participants, see Wuttke, *Erwin Panofsky Korrespondenz*, Band III, pp1099-1117. For Panofsky's lasting respect for Coremans see, E. Panofsky, 'Paul Coremans as a Promoter of Cooperation between the Natural Sciences and the History of Art', *Bulletin de L'Institute royal du Patrimoine artistique*, 8, 1965, pp62-7.

⁶¹⁷ J. Held, 'Review of *Early Netherlandish Painting*', in *The Art Bulletin*, 37:3, September 1955, pp205-234; p206.

Witz, Dirc Bouts, Petrus Christus, Hugo van der Goes, Hans Memlinc and Gerard David. This encompassing coda provides a fitting end to what is a thoroughly comprehensive introduction to early Netherlandish painting.

Panofsky's ultimate objective with *Early Netherlandish Painting* was to situate the level of achievement of the Flemish painters of the early fifteenth-century – most particularly Roger van der Weyden, the Master of Flémalle, and, above all, Jan van Eyck – on a par with that of their more celebrated Italian contemporaries. As mentioned, the Italian Renaissance had dominated art historiography since the time of Giorgio Vasari, and the art of *Les Primitifs flamands* had only begun to be more fully understood and appraised since the turn of the twentieth century. With his *Netherlandish* book Panofsky sought to demonstrate that the work of these artists was indicative of a 'Northern Renaissance'; different from, but concomitant to the accomplishments of the early Italian Renaissance.

To this end, Panofsky opened his book with an 'Introduction' in which he provided an English-language restatement of his German-language essay, *Perspective as Symbolic Form*. In this early iconological study Panofsky had examined the links between artistic production (specifically, the representation of space in art) and human understanding of the world. The thesis Panofsky was keen to reiterate in 1953 was that the 'achievement' in Renaissance art of an accurate, perspectival depiction of space was *symbolic* of the beginnings of a 'modern' *Weltanschauung*.⁶¹⁸ This was a central factor in Panofsky's understanding of how 'The Renaissance' was a new 'period', distinct from the 'Medieval'. For Panofsky, it was significant that Renaissance artists did not simply follow established artistic conventions in their method of pictorial representation. Instead, they began to look critically, *scientifically* even, at the real world. Or, to put it more fundamentally, they began to examine and to reconstruct the way that we actually *perceive* the real world.⁶¹⁹ For Panofsky, Renaissance artists were thus at the forefront of the development of a 'modern' or 'scientific' worldview:

[Perspective] construction formalizes a conception of space which, in spite of all changes, underlies all postmedieval art up to, say, the *Demoiselles d'Avignon* by Picasso (1907), just as it underlies all postmedieval physics up to Einstein's theory of relativity (1905): the conception later to be designated by the Cartesian term

⁶¹⁸ In *Early Netherlandish Painting* Panofsky described perspective as, "that representational method which more than any other single factor distinguishes a 'modern' from a 'medieval' work of art." p3.

⁶¹⁹ *Ibid.*, p3-4.

substance étendue...which is thought of as being three dimensional, continuous and infinite.⁶²⁰

Panofsky noted how perspective was theorised and implemented by Italian artists in the 1420s.⁶²¹ He then pointed out that the same conception of space was also worked out, albeit empirically, by the early Netherlandish painters:

It should be noted...that the Flemings...arrived at a no less 'correct' solution on a purely empirical basis, that is to say, not by deriving a workable construction from optical theory, but by subjecting shop traditions and direct visual experience to draftsmanlike schematisation until consistency was achieved.⁶²²

Panofsky then traced the development of spatial representation in art, from the 'Classical' period, through the 'Byzantine', the 'Romanesque', and the 'Gothic', up to the Trecento in Italy. This lineage provided the context for Panofsky's analysis of how a perspectival representation of space was ultimately achieved by the Italians and the early Flemish artists, almost exactly contemporaneously, in the early fifteenth century. Ultimately, the exacting naturalism of Jan van Eyck's painting, his convincing perspectival 'window on the world', was considered by Panofsky a feat of realization and achievement parallel to that of Brunelleschi and Masaccio. It was, in other words, 'symbolic' of the beginnings of a 'Northern Renaissance'.⁶²³

The significance of this overarching rationale for *Early Netherlandish Painting* is thrown into sharper relief when considered in relation to the work of another historian of Flemish art and culture, Johan Huizinga. In 1919 Huizinga had published *Herfsttij der Middeleeuwen*. This book, translated as *The Waning of the Middle Ages* in 1924, proved so popular that it was re-issued again in a Penguin edition in 1954, almost exactly contemporaneously with Panofsky's *Early Netherlandish Painting*. As can be readily construed from Huizinga's subtitle, 'A study of life, thought and art in France and the Netherlands in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries', his work covered similar ground to Panofsky's *Netherlandish* book. Huizinga too sought to elicit connections between Flemish art and an over-arching 'spirit of the age', and he also considered Jan van Eyck "the most eminent representative of the art of the period."⁶²⁴ However, Huizinga proffered a radically different thesis in regards the position and meaning of early Netherlandish painting.

⁶²⁰ Ibid., p5. In *Perspective as Symbolic Form*, Panofsky wrote, "this view of space is the same view that will later be rationalised by Cartesianism and formalised by Kantianism." op. cit., p66.

⁶²¹ *Early Netherlandish Painting*, p4.

⁶²² Ibid., p5.

⁶²³ For Panofsky's analysis of early Netherlandish painting in *Perspective as Symbolic Form*, see p59-62.

⁶²⁴ *The Waning of the Middle Ages*, p255. Huizinga claimed that his book was an attempt "to arrive at a genuine understanding of the art of the brothers van Eyck and their contemporaries, that is to say, to grasp its meaning by seeing it in connection with the entire life of their times." 'Preface', p v.

For Huizinga, the art of Flemish artists in the early fifteenth-century could not be described as 'Renaissance'. This was not a 'modern' art signifying a new beginning in cultural terms. Instead the Dutch historian considered it entirely symptomatic of the 'Waning of the Middle Ages'. Indeed, the very naturalism considered so significant by Panofsky was, for Huizinga, a feature that was entirely characteristic of a decadent period in the final stages of decline. As Huizinga opined,

Nor should the art of...the brothers Van Eyck be called Renaissance. Both in form and idea it is a product of the waning Middle Ages. If certain historians of art have discovered Renaissance elements in it, it is because they have confounded, very wrongly, realism and Renaissance. Now this scrupulous realism, this aspiration to render exactly all natural details, is the characteristic feature of the spirit of the expiring Middle Ages. It is the same tendency which we encountered in all the fields of thought of the epoch, a sign of decline and not of rejuvenation.⁶²⁵

For Huizinga, the Middle Ages was a period in which, "the tendency to symbolise and to personify was so spontaneous that nearly every thought of itself took a figurative shape."⁶²⁶ Over and again he writes of "a marked tendency of thought to embody itself in images",⁶²⁷ or of how the art and literature of the period was marked by a compulsion to give "concrete form to every concept of the mind."⁶²⁸ For Huizinga, such symbolisation "allowed the mind to transcend the deficiencies of logical expression."⁶²⁹ However, he also points out that it acted as "a sort of short circuit of thought".⁶³⁰ Ultimately, Huizinga concludes, this compulsion became an impediment to any properly rational or 'scientific' understanding.⁶³¹ Furthermore, Huizinga believed that this tendency towards symbolisation was so habitual, so automatic and mechanical, that it was divested of any real vitality as a mode of thought.⁶³² For Huizinga, the proliferation of a hackneyed religious symbolism had become symbolic in itself of the petrification and crystallisation of thought during the 'Waning of the Middle Ages':

The spirit of the Middle Ages, still plastic and naïve, longs to give concrete shape to every conception. Every thought seeks expression in an image, but in this image it solidifies and becomes rigid. By this tendency to embodiment in visible forms all holy

⁶²⁵ Ibid, p252-3.

⁶²⁶ Ibid., p190.

⁶²⁷ Ibid., p136.

⁶²⁸ Ibid., p256

⁶²⁹ Ibid., p188.

⁶³⁰ Ibid., p184.

⁶³¹ "The symbolic mentality was an obstacle to the development of causal thought, as causal and genetic relations must needs look insignificant by the side of symbolic connections." Ibid., p194. Elsewhere Huizinga describes the process of symbolisation as, "a defective translation into images of secret connections dimly felt." Ibid., p194.

⁶³² "(T)he symbolising habit maintained itself, adding ever new figures that were like petrified flowers. Symbolism at all times shows a tendency to become mechanical...it grows to be a parasite clinging to thought, causing it to degenerate." Ibid., p188.

concepts are constantly exposed to the danger of hardening into mere externalism. For in assuming a definite figurative shape thought loses its ethereal and vague qualities, and pious feeling is apt to resolve itself in the image.⁶³³

The art of the van Eycks was thus adjudged a material manifestation of the hollow externalism that characterised the late Middle Ages.⁶³⁴ Huizinga criticised in particular the naturalistic treatment in paintings such as van Eyck's *Madonna of Chancellor Rolin*, where heavenly figures, dressed in lavish contemporary costume and set against painstakingly realistic backdrops, were depicted inhabiting the same space as recognisable contemporary individuals. For Huizinga, this was not the quiet, pious art described and praised by other commentators. Instead, he believed that this conflation of spiritual and temporal boundaries, depicted in the minutest natural detail, served to consign the spiritual content of such paintings to the level of the mundane.⁶³⁵ Indeed, Huizinga asserted that the art of Jan van Eyck merely reflected the extravagant sumptuousness, the unbridled luxury and the decadence of the epoch in which he and his patrons lived:

This art which we admire, bloomed in the atmosphere of the aristocratic life, which repels us...In the piety interpreted by the art of the fifteenth century, the extremes of mysticism and gross materialism meet.⁶³⁶

Though certainly impressive, the naturalism of van Eyck was, for Huizinga, merely a feat of surface re-presentation, a mechanical copying equated with a fundamental lack of artistic creativity and imagination. Indeed, Huizinga proclaimed that the "craving for endless elaboration of details"⁶³⁷ in van Eyck's painting was achieved at the expense of an overall harmony and composition, and represented a fundamental lack of 'idea'.⁶³⁸ Such rigid, unthinking formalism was considered entirely characteristic of those *waning* Middle Ages:

All that we cited above as characteristic of the mental processes of the epoch: the craving to give a definite form to every idea, and the overcrowding of the mind with figures and forms...all this reappears in art. There, too, we find the tendency to leave nothing without form, without figure, without ornament...The form develops at the expense of the idea, the ornament grows rank...A horror vacui reigns, always a symptom of artistic decline.⁶³⁹

⁶³³ Ibid., p136.

⁶³⁴ Huizinga gives much more credit to Hubert van Eyck as an artistic personality than many subsequent commentators.

⁶³⁵ *The Waning of the Middle Ages*, p192 & p241.

⁶³⁶ Ibid., p238 & 241.

⁶³⁷ Ibid., p258.

⁶³⁸ Ibid., p256 & p258-9.

⁶³⁹ Ibid., 227-8.

Huizinga gave particular credence to the idea that “this minuteness in the execution of details”; the focus upon an “unlimited wealth of details, without arriving at a judgement on the beauty of the whole”, was “the fundamental fault of Flemish art.”⁶⁴⁰ Ultimately, he surmised,

...we have come to the limit of the creative faculties of these artists. Easily masters of their craft, so long as the observation of reality is their guide, their mastery fails at once when imaginative creation of new motifs is called for.⁶⁴¹

In proffering such criticism Huizinga was giving vent to some age-old Italianate biases. Indeed, the Dutch historian even quoted Michelangelo’s condemnation of Flemish painting at some length and with some approval:

The Flemish pictures please women, especially the old and very young ones, and also the monks and nuns, and lastly men of the world who are not capable of understanding true harmony. In Flanders they paint, before all things, to render exactly and deceptively the outward appearance of things...[T]hough the eye is agreeably impressed, these pictures have neither art nor reason; neither symmetry nor proportion; neither choice of values nor grandeur. In short, this art is without power and without distinction; it aims at rendering minutely many things at the same time, of which a single one would have sufficed to call forth a man’s whole application.⁶⁴²

Huizinga obviously believed that Michelangelo’s disparaging criticism of Flemish painting was entirely just, and he related it directly to his own interpretation of the period:

It was the medieval spirit itself which Michelangelo judged...[The Italian artist] here truly represents the Renaissance as opposed to the Middle Ages. What he condemns in Flemish art are exactly the essential traits of the declining Middle Ages.⁶⁴³

Ultimately for Huizinga, the new naturalism of Flemish art, however impressive in its detail and execution, was not symbolic of a new beginning, of an emergent ‘Northern Renaissance’. It was instead considered entirely indicative of the final stages of a period in decline and atrophy:

“The naïve, and at the same time refined, naturalism of the brothers Van Eyck was a new form of pictorial expression; but viewed from the standpoint of culture in general, it was but another manifestation of the crystallising tendency of thought which we noticed in all the aspects of the mentality of the declining Middle Ages. Instead of heralding the advent of the Renaissance, as is generally assumed, this

⁶⁴⁰ Ibid., p243-4.

⁶⁴¹ Ibid., p292.

⁶⁴² Ibid., p244.

⁶⁴³ Ibid., p244. Huizinga also writes towards the end of his book, “When more is required than the direct and accurate vision of reality, the superiority of pictorial expression at once vanishes, and then is felt the justice of Michelangelo’s criticism.” p290.

naturalism is rather one of the ultimate forms of development of the medieval mind. The craving to turn every sacred idea into precise images, to give it a distinct and clearly outlined form...controlled art as it controlled popular beliefs and theology. The art of the brothers Van Eyck closes a period.⁶⁴⁴

Although Panofsky does not make it explicit in the text of his publication, his analysis of early Netherlandish painting can be understood, in many respects, as a rejoinder to Huizinga.⁶⁴⁵ For Panofsky, the new naturalism in the work of an artist such as Jan van Eyck was not simply some kind of surface 'sheen', applied over the top of an increasingly over-determined and outworn mode of symbolisation. Instead, the increasing ability and enthusiasm for portraying the natural world, the early Netherlandish artists' "hunger for reality"⁶⁴⁶, was adjudged by Panofsky to have engendered a new, 'modern' approach to symbolisation altogether.

In a central chapter of *Early Netherlandish Painting*, entitled, 'Reality and Symbol in Early Flemish Painting: *spiritualia sub metaphoris corporalium*'⁶⁴⁷, Panofsky proposed the idea that the new naturalism of the Flemish masters, Jan van Eyck in particular, was so all-encompassing that the usage of overt 'symbols' suddenly seemed out of place; too jarring with what had become a convincing 'window on the world' perspective. This 'modern' development thus marked a fundamental departure from the procedures of 'medieval' artists:

A non-perspective and non-naturalistic art, not recognising either unity of space or unity of time, can employ symbols without regard for empirical probability or even possibility. In High Medieval representations, personages of the remote past or the distant future could share the stage of time – or rather timelessness – with characters of the present. Objects accepted and plainly recognisable as symbols could mingle with real buildings, plants, or implements on the same level of reality – or, rather, non-reality.⁶⁴⁸

As an example of this 'medieval' symbolisation, Panofsky referred his reader to the Psalter of Yolande de Soissons, indicating how in the *Crucifixion* scene there appeared a grouping of figures that included the Virgin, St John, and the centurion, but also, and more anachronistically, Moses and the prophet Balaam. Panofsky also pointed out how this medieval artist had depicted the Cross "as a hybrid of artefact and twelve-branched, richly foliated tree" in order to elicit the symbolic connection between the crucifix and the Tree of Life. Similarly, Panofsky notes, in order to illustrate

⁶⁴⁴ Ibid., p241-2.

⁶⁴⁵ Panofsky does include *The Waning of the Middle Ages* in the bibliography of *Early Netherlandish Painting*, but he makes only a couple of scant references to Huizinga's work in the main body of his text: p8 & p387, n.4.

⁶⁴⁶ Ibid., p135.

⁶⁴⁷ This phrase 'corporeal metaphors of things spiritual' was borrowed from the writings of Thomas Aquinas. For this see, C. Harbison, 'Iconography and Iconology', in *Early Netherlandish Paintings: Rediscovery, Reception, and Research*, op. cit., pp378-406.op. cit., p398.

⁶⁴⁸ *Early Netherlandish Painting*, p140.

“Simeon’s words according to Luke II, 35, (‘Yea a sword shall pierce through thy soul also’)” the medieval artist had, quite literally, depicted a huge sword physically piercing “the bosom of Our Lady.”⁶⁴⁹ It was in contrast to this open or ‘overt’ symbolism, so characteristic of the work of ‘medieval’ artists, that Panofsky hoped to demonstrate the more ‘modern’ approach of the early Flemish painters:

We can easily see that such a blend of present, past and future, of things real and things symbolic, proved to be less and less compatible with a style which, with the introduction of perspective, had begun to commit itself to naturalism. The application of perspective, we remember, implies that the painting surface is understood as a ‘window’ through which we look out into a section of space. If taken seriously, this means no more nor less than that pictorial space is subject to the rules that govern empirical space, that there must be no obvious contradiction between what we do see in a picture and what we might see in reality...A way had to be found to reconcile the new naturalism with a thousand years of Christian tradition; and this attempt resulted in what may be termed concealed or disguised symbolism as opposed to open or obvious symbolism.⁶⁵⁰

For Panofsky this new approach to symbolism was itself symbolic of a new level of artistic achievement, and it is in this sense that Jan van Eyck emerges from *Early Netherlandish Painting* as the most significant artist of the period.⁶⁵¹

Jan’s *Madonna in a Church*, “one of his loveliest and best known pictures”, is the single painting used by Panofsky to elucidate his theory of ‘disguised symbolism’.⁶⁵² After a short description of the work Panofsky counters the argument that van Eyck, as a young and immature artist, had painted the Madonna in this picture grossly out of scale in relation to the church in which she stands. Instead, Panofsky proposed the idea that this painting should not be understood as a painting of the Madonna *in* a church, but rather as a symbolic representation of the Madonna *as* The Church.⁶⁵³ Panofsky then furnishes his reader with a detailed exegesis on the iconographical history of this idea, before concluding,

The ‘disproportion’ between the figure and the architecture, then, is not a sign of immaturity. It is, on the contrary, a symbol: a deviation from nature which,

⁶⁴⁹ Ibid.

⁶⁵⁰ Ibid., p140-1.

⁶⁵¹ Ibid., p143.

⁶⁵² Significantly, van Eyck’s *Madonna in a Church* had been transported across the Atlantic at the end of the War. It was displayed in an exhibition at the National Gallery, Washington in 1948. G.E. Hamlyn, ‘German Paintings in the National Gallery: Official Statement’, *College Art Journal*, 5:2, January 1946, pp75-7. In 1945 Panofsky told Booth Tarkington how it was “...funny to think of Jan van Eyck’s *Virgin in a Church*...as now being within 200 miles of Princeton.” December 15th, 1945 (1061).

⁶⁵³ *Early Netherlandish Painting*, p145.

deliberately retained within the framework of a naturalistic style, makes us aware of the fact that this wealth of physical details, so carefully observed and reconstructed, is dominated by a metaphysical idea.⁶⁵⁴

Panofsky was making the point that Jan van Eyck was so well acquainted, so completely *au fait*, with the rules of naturalistic representation that he could manipulate and play around with them for intentional, significant, or *symbolic*, effect.

Panofsky then devotes considerable attention to the light that floods through the windows of this depicted church, illuminating the scene within. He points out how van Eyck had painted this light entering the building directly from the North; a 'fact' Panofsky claims you can surmise because, "There is in all Christendom no Gothic church having a fullfledged cathedral choir with radiating chapels that would face the West and not the East."⁶⁵⁵ As with the huge scale of the Virgin, Panofsky contends that this 'discrepancy' in van Eyck's supreme naturalism must have been entirely intentional:

If it is hazardous to accuse the most observant of painters – and also one of the most erudite – of a mistake in scale, it would be almost sacrilege to accuse him of a mistake as to the simplest law of nature and the most familiar of ecclesiastical customs. If he decided to reverse the laws of nature, he must have had a reason for doing so...⁶⁵⁶

The explanation Panofsky proffers for this never-before mentioned 'anomaly' – its iconographical 'significance' - is that van Eyck was not depicting normal daylight. The artist was instead representing "the supernatural, or 'superessential' light which illumines the City of God, the Light Divine disguised as the light of day."⁶⁵⁷ Panofsky then backs up this iconographical interpretation by pointing out that,

on the border of the Virgin's magnificent red robe there is embroidered and partly visible the favourite Mariological text of the van Eyck brothers, a text which recurs in the Ghent altarpiece...It reads in translation as follows: "It [meaning: Divine Wisdom as diffused in the universal Church and embodied in the Virgin Mary] is more beautiful than the sun and above the whole order of the stars. Being compared with the [natural] light, she is found before it. She is the brightness of eternal light, and the flawless mirror of God's majesty." Here it is said in so many words that the radiance of the light to which Divine wisdom is likened is not only more brilliant than the sun but also independent of the natural order of the universe...and that it is superior as compared to the light of day...What more convincing pictorial image could there be of a light that is above the order of the physical universe, that illumines a day not followed by night, and that 'reacheth from one end of the world

⁶⁵⁴ Ibid., p147.

⁶⁵⁵ Ibid.

⁶⁵⁶ Ibid.

⁶⁵⁷ Ibid.

to the other', than a sun which shines from the North and thereby proclaims that it can never go down?⁶⁵⁸

Jan Van Eyck is thus represented as an immensely learned and cultivated individual; an autonomous artist in complete command of the symbolising process. Panofsky suggests that van Eyck's "defiance of the laws of astronomy" was only possible because he had developed a proto-scientific understanding of how the natural world actually worked and functioned. For Panofsky, the art of Jan van Eyck was not simply focussed upon material surface; nor was it a crystallised form of expression, lost in a morass of unthinking symbolism. Instead, Panofsky elucidates for his reader the profound intellectual depth and the richness of 'meaning', of 'content', that is to be found in the painting of Jan van Eyck. For Panofsky, this artist's use of symbolism evidenced a newly rationalised approach to religious ideas. It proffered an interpretation of profound religious truth made graspable through the exertion of human reason. Panofsky's concept of 'disguised symbolism' thus placed the artist at the forefront in the development of new intellectual ideas; a creative power materialising new, and inventive ways for the human individual to comprehend their relationship with the Divine. It was in this context, as a figure deemed worthy of intellectual regard and status, that Panofsky presented Jan van Eyck as a 'Renaissance' artist.

Not all of Panofsky's judgements and pronouncements on early Netherlandish art have stood the test of time.⁶⁵⁹ Nonetheless, *Early Netherlandish Painting* should be adjudged a monumental undertaking and a significant achievement. On its release the book stood as a kind of survey of the existent literature in what had been a heterogeneous and contentious field; a summa, as it were, of previous scholarship. Indeed, as a 'humanist' scholar, Panofsky was both fastidious and assiduous in his 'respect for tradition'. References to the work of other scholars are abundant in his text. Whether accepting the opinion of another writer, or providing a contrary analysis, Panofsky apprises his reader of the breadth of opinion and the extent of previous scholarship on that particular subject. The work of Max J. Friedländer provided a particular touchstone, and it could be claimed that Panofsky considered his book the successor to Friedländer's seminal *Altniederländische Malerei*.⁶⁶⁰ Such respect for tradition informed and positioned Panofsky's own contribution to the

⁶⁵⁸ Ibid., p148.

⁶⁵⁹ Craig Harbison provides a measured analysis of the reception of Panofsky's work in the decades since its original publication: *Iconography and Iconology*, op. cit.

⁶⁶⁰ Panofsky provided Friedländer with a copy of *Early Netherlandish Painting*, bearing the inscription, 'M.J. Friedländer, magistro magistrorum, trepida manu adscripsit Erwin Panofsky, discipulorum discipulus' Panofsky also credited Friedländer with helping to secure his permanent post at Hamburg in 1922. During the inflation of that year Panofsky, an unpaid *Privatdozent* with a young family to support, had lost his entire private fortune. He was considering changing to "a more lucrative profession", when Friedländer wrote to the Hamburg Senate suggesting something be done to help secure his future at the University. See Panofsky to Fritz Oppenheimer (nephew of Max J. Friedländer), October 7th, 1966 (AAA).

field. As had been the case with his *Dürer*, Panofsky's Flemish book was itself deeply contextualised. It also functioned as a comprehensive introduction to a wide and complex subject area, and as such it laid the foundations for subsequent study of Netherlandish art in the English language.⁶⁶¹ Combining detailed examination of individual works and artists with wider historical analysis, *Early Netherlandish Painting*, in many respects, provided an example of what 'humanistic' art-historical scholarship could, and perhaps even should do.

As had been the case with his previous American books, Panofsky's *Early Netherlandish Painting* was developed directly from a series of lectures, and the format of the eventual publication mirrored that of the lectures from which it was developed.⁶⁶² Like his Dürer lectures at Northwestern, Panofsky's Norton Lectures were open to the general public, and thus he was compelled once more to appeal to a more 'general' audience. This balance between the 'popular' and the 'scholarly' was one he worked hard on again in this publication.⁶⁶³ Adhering to what had become, by then, standard practice, Panofsky worked the scripts from his Norton Lectures into drafts that were then dictated to his secretary. These revised scripts formed the basis of the resultant publication.⁶⁶⁴ As had also become customary with Panofsky's written work, *Early Netherlandish Painting* retained something of the conversational flavour of his spoken delivery. Sentences in this book begin, for example, "Now, as I said before..."; or "This is what I had in mind when I said..."; or "When we speak of the period after 1384, then, the term 'Burgundian' has two different meanings. Either we refer to the new Burgundian Empire, or we refer to the geographical germ of this entity, the original Duchy of Bourgogne...."⁶⁶⁵ Such qualifications continually reinforce the notion that Panofsky is 'speaking' directly to his reader. This is an intentional device designed to involve the reader, in a collusive act, in the explication of the very material with which they are being presented.

Panofsky also makes every effort to communicate with his reader in as straightforward a manner as possible. Art-historical details are often defined in a way that would make sense to the 'educated layman'. Panofsky describes, for example, how "corbel rings fasten the shafts (in a Gothic cathedral) to the wall much in the same way that gas or water pipes are attached by brackets."⁶⁶⁶ The author

⁶⁶¹ M. Belozerskaya, *Re-thinking the Renaissance: Burgundian Arts Across Europe*, 2002, p44.

⁶⁶² Panofsky to Saxl, October 7th, 1947 (1178).

⁶⁶³ In his Preface Panofsky explicitly mentions that, "Like my previous book on Albrecht Dürer, this study has grown out of a series of public lectures...It steers, therefore, a similarly precarious course between the requirements of the 'general reader' and those of the special student." *Early Netherlandish Painting* pvii.

⁶⁶⁴ Panofsky's Harvard lectures were handwritten verbatim beforehand (Panofsky to Eleanor Marquand, May, 2nd, 1947 (1153)). It was from these scripts that he developed the drafts which he would then go over with his secretary, Ellen Bailly. *Ibid.*, pviii.

⁶⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, p15, p20, & p76 respectively.

⁶⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, p15.

also treats his reader to genial, almost ‘clubby’ pronouncements on significant historical figures; such as when Jean, Duc de Berry is described as,

Less ruthless and less politically ambitious, though not much more ethical than Louis of Anjou, this great collector and patron of the arts was a ‘tycoon’ rather than a tyrant. He could be harsh to the point of cruelty and, on occasion, rise to real bravery. But normally he preferred intrigue and negotiation to drastic action and maintained, as far as he could, a neutral and conciliatory attitude in all the major conflicts of the period. His main concern was to amass riches by all imaginable methods, probably including being bribed by the enemy...Cautious cultured and personally affable, he managed to survive his two wives, all his brothers, all his sons, several of his nephews and died in 1416 at the age of seventy-six, leaving behind him an equally enormous amount of possessions and debts.⁶⁶⁷

Similarly conversational, even colloquial references abound in Panofsky’s writing; such as when the reader is informed how, in the architectural setting in a painting by the Master of Flémalle, “...the reliefs in the spandrels and on the capitals smack of the early fifteenth rather than the twelfth century.”⁶⁶⁸ Describing the diminutive stature of van Eyck’s ‘Madonna in a Church’, Panofsky even goes so far as to quote a character from a popular novel written by his friend Booth Tarkington: “‘ain’t twice the size of a postal card,’ as Mr Rumbin would say.”⁶⁶⁹ Further playful allusions to aspects of more contemporary culture are found in references to the writing of Henry James,⁶⁷⁰ or when Panofsky describes,

...the prison scene known as ‘Caritas Romana’ where a young lady, Pero by name, saves the life of her aged father by offering him her breast, a demonstration of loving-kindness praised by Pliny, depicted in Roman wall paintings, much favoured by the Baroque, gracefully metamorphosed by Guy de Maupassant, and last observed (or so he says) by Mr Steinbeck near Route 66 in California.⁶⁷¹

These seemingly casual references, combined with Panofsky’s now pitch-perfect, mellifluous English prose, ensured that *Early Netherlandish Painting* retained a ‘popular’ appeal. However, with this prestigious commission the émigré scholar was also determined that his publication be ‘scholarly’. In his *Netherlandish* book, unlike in his *Dürer*, Panofsky went to great lengths to include detailed footnotes. As well as referencing his scholarly sources within the main body of his text, Panofsky included copious footnotes notes to provide thorough clarification on many individual points of

⁶⁶⁷ Ibid, p40-1.

⁶⁶⁸ Ibid., p136.

⁶⁶⁹ Ibid., p144. This was a quotation from Tarkington’s 1937 short story, *Rumbin Galleries*.

⁶⁷⁰ Panofsky asserts that, “Jan van Eyck, like Henry James’ Linda Pallant, ‘knew the value of intervals’.” *Early Netherlandish Painting*, p165.

⁶⁷¹ Ibid., p53. This was, of course, a reference to the act of pity for a starving stranger carried out by Rose of Sharon Joad (shortly after having delivered a stillborn child) in Steinbeck’s 1939 novel *The Grapes of Wrath*.

detail. The lengthy and extensive footnotes in *Early Netherlandish Painting* provide an impressive corpus of scholarship in their own right, and some are akin to mini essays in themselves. They provide the scholarly apparatus, the contextual framework that equips the more serious reader with the requisite level of scholarly detail; all the while allowing the themes and ideas presented within the main text to flow on smoothly. One editor of the text, struck by Panofsky's style, provided this telling observation:

"At one point (and this is rather typical of his suave but casual scholarship), he says that no one has fully...examined the iconography of the Noli me tangere scene. Whereupon he proceeds to furnish, in those pages of notes which are rich in valuable asides, all the fundamental data for the desiderated study of the Noli me tangere scene...Let me repeat, this is typical."⁶⁷²

Panofsky's "suave but casual scholarship" was, and is still now, noted for its smooth and almost effortless quality. However the adaptation of the Norton Lecture scripts for publication proved a difficult process. Panofsky's supplementation of his lecture scripts with detailed notes and scholarly asides, combined with the effort to retain the 'popular' feel of his oral deliveries, proved inordinately time-consuming. Although the Norton Lectures were completed in March 1948, it would be a further three years before Panofsky had readied a manuscript for publication. In the summer of 1949 he described the process as, "...a task which occupies me to such an extent that I have even given up lecturing for the time being except for a small seminar in Princeton."⁶⁷³ He then continued,

"...it is much harder to convert spoken lectures into a more or less printable text than to write a new book. If you write a book you do the work first, and write the text afterwards. In a case like mine you have a text, but you must change every word of it as you do the work."⁶⁷⁴

The creation of the copious footnotes for *Early Netherlandish Painting*, and their alignment with the main body of text also proved to be an exceptionally taxing process for Panofsky's secretary. Roxanne Heckscher recalled that when she first began working for Panofsky nobody thought she would last long. Panofsky's previous secretary had left his employment after suffering something

⁶⁷² Wallace Brockway to the Bollingen Foundation, December 31st, 1951 (1514).

⁶⁷³ Panofsky to George Kubler, January 24th, 1949 (1277).

⁶⁷⁴ Ibid. When Panofsky began teaching again he concentrated on the subject on which he was then working. He taught a seminar course at NYU in the fall term 1950/51, for example, on Iconographical problems in Fifteenth-Century (early Flemish, German and Italian) Painting' (Panofsky to Walter W.S. Cook, February 27th, 1950 (1353)); and he lectured on 'Problems in Flemish Painting' at Yale during his spell there in the same academic year, 1950/51. (Panofsky to Summer McK. Crosby, September 19th, 1950 (1391)).

close to a nervous breakdown whilst working on *Early Netherlandish Painting*. As Heckscher recalls, Panofsky informed her “it was my footnotes that did it!”⁶⁷⁵

Panofsky’s determination to issue *Early Netherlandish Painting* as a genuine contribution to scholarship meant that he also encountered great difficulty seeing the book through the press. Although he had finished his manuscript by the April of 1951⁶⁷⁶ the book did not appear in print for a further two years. During this time Panofsky often complained of his “long struggles” with the Harvard University Press.⁶⁷⁷ Panofsky himself acknowledged that the book had become somewhat bulky and expensive.⁶⁷⁸ The main text amounted to over 250,000 words, with the footnotes comprising another 90,000. In addition there were over 500 illustrations, a substantial bibliography, and a considerable index. One editor, reviewing this “hefty” book for publication, even suggested it would have to be split into three volumes: two comprising the text and footnotes, and one containing the images.⁶⁷⁹

A considerable delay ensued as the Harvard Press refused to commit the money to have such a costly book published in such an unwieldy format. Panofsky grew concerned that the Harvard Press was going to compromise on the quality of the images and the formatting of the printed page in order to issue the book as cheaply as possible.⁶⁸⁰ When the Press suggested printing the main text in two columns, in order to reduce costs, Panofsky’s irritation bubbled over. As he complained to one sympathetic correspondent,

“...when the Art Bulletin attempted to adopt this horrible system at the time of a serious paper shortage during the War, it received so many protests and cancellations that it had to revert to normal practice immediately...The Harvard Press is unfortunately quite insensitive to the requirements of typographical workmanship and quality of reproduction...and does not see that its preoccupation with economy is harmful even from the purely practical view point of salesmanship.”⁶⁸¹

Perhaps conscious of having had his fingers burnt when the Princeton Press issued his *Dürer* in a one-volume edition; Panofsky was certainly not prepared to compromise on the more ‘scholarly’ format of *Early Netherlandish Painting*.

⁶⁷⁵ *A Secretary’s Recollections*, op. cit.

⁶⁷⁶ Panofsky to Kurt Wolff, April 20th, 1951 (AAA).

⁶⁷⁷ Panofsky wrote to Ernst Holzinger of his “...langen Kämpfen mit der Harvard Press.” April 22nd, 1952 (1539).

⁶⁷⁸ Panofsky to Louis Grodecki, July 14th, 1951 (1465).

⁶⁷⁹ Wallace Brockway to the Bollingen Foundation, December 31st, 1951 (1514).

⁶⁸⁰ Panofsky to Ernst Holzinger, April 22nd, 1952 (1539).

⁶⁸¹ Panofsky to John D. Barrett, May 12th, 1952 (1542).

As relations with the Harvard Press deteriorated, Panofsky sought out other possibilities for seeing his early Netherlandish material in print.⁶⁸² To this end he made a calculated mention of his difficulties to his friend, the publisher Kurt Wolff. Wolff was a fellow émigré with whom Panofsky had worked previously and happily in Germany.⁶⁸³ Wolff had established the successful *Pantheon Books* in America, and he was closely involved with the Bollingen Foundation, an educational organisation established along the lines of a university press in order to advance knowledge in the humanities.⁶⁸⁴ Panofsky was hopeful that Wolff could offer some way out of the difficulties he was experiencing with the Harvard Press, and when he made an ‘off the cuff’ remark that *Early Netherlandish Painting* would prove “probably unpublishable”, his old friend replied,

*“I should like to ask whether you have really not yet made arrangement for publication. I imagine the Bollingen Foundation would not be afraid of footnotes or of the plates, and that they might be glad to consider the book for publication in the Bollingen Series.”*⁶⁸⁵

Following his communication with Wolff Panofsky entered into discussions with the Bollingen Foundation as to the possible publication of his Netherlandish material.⁶⁸⁶ He had worked extremely hard on this publication and he was determined to see it in print. Furthermore, *Early Netherlandish Painting* was developed from Panofsky’s most prestigious American commission and was to be symbolic of the émigré scholar’s prominence and status in American art history. As such Panofsky became increasingly exasperated at the Harvard University Press, or at least the Corporation that ran the Press, for dragging its feet. As he informed one correspondent from the Bollingen Foundation in April 1952, a full four years since the Norton Lectures were delivered,

*“...any further procrastination will force me to obtain release from the [Harvard] Corporation. Since my obligation to deliver the manuscript...and Harvard’s obligation to print this manuscript are mutual, and since my manuscript has been delivered to the Harvard University Press in June, 1951, I feel that the Corporation cannot very well withhold this release in case the Press cannot obligate itself to proceed without delay and to publish in 1953.”*⁶⁸⁷

Panofsky also made it clear that he was keen to explore,

⁶⁸² Panofsky to Louis Grodecki, March 5th, 1952 (1527).

⁶⁸³ The *Kurt Wolff Verlag* had issued Panofsky’s *Die deutsche Plastik des elften bis dreizehnten Jahrhunderts* in 1924. For details of Panofsky’s respect and genuine admiration for the work of this publisher, see the reference he provided for Wolff in America: December 21st, 1942 (889).

⁶⁸⁴ For details of Wolff’s career in America see, S.J. Schuyler, *Kurt Wolff and Hermann Broch: Publisher and Author in Exile*, unpublished dissertation (PhD), 1984.

⁶⁸⁵ Kurt Wolff to Panofsky, April 20th, 1951 (AAA).

⁶⁸⁶ Panofsky to Millard Meiss, December 8th, 1951 (1505).

⁶⁸⁷ Panofsky to John D. Barrett, April 4th, 1952 (1538).

“...the possibility of entrusting the manufacture of the book to ‘Pantheon Books’, regardless of whether the publication will bear the imprint of the Harvard University Press alone or the joint imprint of the latter and the Bollingen Foundation...[T]he procedure of seeing the book through the press would be greatly simplified if I could work with a publisher of Mr Wolff’s recognised capability and affability, and with whom I myself have had most pleasant experiences in the past.”⁶⁸⁸

Eventually, a conciliatory deal was struck with the Harvard Press which saw *Early Netherlandish Painting* published in two volumes, in a format that Panofsky was, on the whole, satisfied with. In the first volume, the main text was printed in one column, with footnotes in two columns at the end of the main text; a somewhat novel solution at the time.⁶⁸⁹ The first volume also contained a “Condensed Bibliography”, with titles listed in two columns over 20 pages,⁶⁹⁰ an index (in three columns) over 36 pages; and 66 images (accompanying the ‘Introduction’) spread over 28 plates. The second volume was devoted entirely to the 496 illustrations, condensed into 334 black and white plates. *Early Netherlandish Painting: Its Origins and Character* went on sale with a shelf price of \$35.⁶⁹¹ The first 1500-copy edition was published at a cost of \$30,000. Of this the Bollingen Foundation contributed \$10,000 and the Institute for Advanced Study \$500, specifically for the printing of the notes.⁶⁹² Panofsky himself provided just under \$700 of his own money in order to see the book through the press.

Almost immediately upon publication, *Early Netherlandish Painting; its Origins and Character* was adjudged a great success, and a landmark in the history of art written in the English language. It was awarded the College Art Association prize for ‘The most distinguished work of art historical scholarship published in 1953 by an American or Canadian scholar’. The CAA’s Committee of Selection at this time consisted of Charles Rufus Morey, Wilhelm Köhler and Horst W. Janson – an indication of the blend of émigré and native talent that was then determining the course of American art historical scholarship. At a CAA reception, Janson paid homage to Panofsky’s achievement thus:

It is tempting to compare ‘Early Netherlandish Painting’ to one of those marvellous Eyckian landscapes on which, among many other things, Dr Panofsky has written with such penetration and discernment. In his text, too, we feel that tremendous

⁶⁸⁸ Ibid.

⁶⁸⁹ Even though printed in this condensed format, and in smaller font, Panofsky’s footnotes still covered 150 pages.

⁶⁹⁰ This condensed version was prefaced with the words, “This bibliography does not include titles referred to only once, except for books and articles of special interest directly related to the subject of the book.” *Early Netherlandish Painting*, p513.

⁶⁹¹ According to the rate of inflation, a book costing \$35 in 1953 would cost around \$300 today.

⁶⁹² Panofsky to T.J. Wilson, Director of the Harvard University Press, April 20th, 1956 (1936). *Early Netherlandish Painting*, pvii-viii.

respect for every small detail, and at the same time the ability to invest such detail with wider significance, so that at every turn of the road we may hope to come upon unexpected and refreshing vistas. We feel a sense of order that is never imposed from the outside but is, rather, a quality that seems to reside within the material itself, so that this vast panorama of historical scholarship retains at every point a sense of the natural unfolding of events – each event unique and yet organically linked with its neighbours.⁶⁹³

And in a private letter Janson was no less effusive in his praise, describing Panofsky's "magnum opus" as "a summa of the humanist tradition in our field."⁶⁹⁴

Panofsky's work received particular approbation from those young American art historians who had been graduate students with him in the early thirties. Harry Bober, for example, spoke for this emerging generation when he declared that,

'Early Netherlandish Painting', [Panofsky's] finest work in some forty years of extraordinary production, must be reckoned a masterpiece. He offers us, as none other could, a banquet for the gourmet and a feast for any man with healthy intellectual appetite. With incredible authority this book subsumes all scholarship of our half century of intensive interest in the subject and establishes a new point of departure for all future studies.⁶⁹⁵

Particular credit and praise was also accorded to Panofsky for the manner in which he had proven himself able to present his extensive erudition in such a 'digestible' manner. Wallace Brockway, for example, noted that although the likes of Roger Fry and Martin Conway had analysed the antecedents of the great Flemish masters before,

*"Dr Panofsky is the first to put all this complicated material into the proper perspective of logical development without pain to the lay reader or violence to the specialist."*⁶⁹⁶

Another commentator made special mention of Panofsky's successful blend of the 'scholarly' and the 'popular', stating that,

The book makes no concession for the benefit of the uninformed; yet such is the author's well-known gift for writing vividly and entertainingly that many who have little concern for the intricacies of the historical problems dealt with will be fascinated and delighted with its text....Much of the charm of the book is due to the

⁶⁹³ A transcript of Janson's tribute appeared in the *College Art Journal*, 14:3, spring 1955, p188.

⁶⁹⁴ H.W. Janson to Panofsky, November 30th, 1954 (1728).

⁶⁹⁵ H. Bober, 'Jewels of the Floodlands', *Saturday Review of Literature*, May 8th, 1954, pp38-9, p38. See also, M. Meiss 'A World Jewel-Like and Sparkling', *New York Times*, March 7th, 1954, p5.

⁶⁹⁶ Wallace Brockway to the Bollingen Foundation, December 31st, 1951 (1514).

lightness with which the author carries and presents his vast erudition. He...can present complex problems so that they become 'translucent', as it were.⁶⁹⁷

Martin Davies, an English specialist on Netherlandish art, made the pertinent comment that,

Lectures turned into a book do not always read well; but here there is no trace of thinness, and Dr Panofsky's written sentences flow on like good speech. The book gives us throughout the impression of intelligence at work; and something fortunately preserved from the lecture-form may contribute to the clarity of that impression.⁶⁹⁸

Yet another rapt reviewer made mention of the style of Panofsky's book:

With his exceptional skill as a writer the author presents – on important issues – the argument in a kind of openwork technique so that the reader feels invited to take part in the discussion and gets the impression almost of having a voice in drawing the final conclusions.⁶⁹⁹

These reviews clearly demonstrate that Panofsky's weighty reputation was predicated upon his remarkable ability to communicate his consummate erudition, almost as much as it was based upon the erudition itself.

Panofsky was immensely gratified by the "favourable reception" his book had engendered.⁷⁰⁰ However, once again he remained apprehensive as to the more 'specialist' reviews that would be written by his fellow émigré scholars. In November 1954 Panofsky informed his close friend Horst Janson,

*"Thus far, I have no complaints about its [Early Netherlandish Painting's] reception; but the two really critical reviews – one by Held in the Art Bulletin, the other by Pächt in the Burlington Magazine – are still outstanding, and since I have taken issue with Pächt on several questions dear to his heart, I am not overly optimistic in this respect. In short, no one should be deemed happy before he is executed."*⁷⁰¹

Both Held and Pächt were Jewish émigré art historians with a scholarly background in this particular subject area. Held was a younger German scholar who had worked for three years as assistant to Max J. Friedländer in the Berlin Gemäldegalerie. Pächt was a more established scholar in the field of northern European art, and a direct contemporary of Panofsky. Pächt had been a colleague of

⁶⁹⁷ J. Held, *Review of 'Early Netherlandish Painting'*, op. cit., p205.

⁶⁹⁸ M. Davies, 'Flemish Founding Fathers', *Art News*, 53:3, May 1954, p25.

⁶⁹⁹ O. Pächt, 'Panofsky's *Early Netherlandish Painting – I*', *The Burlington Magazine*, 98:637, April 1956, pp110-116; p110.

⁷⁰⁰ Panofsky to Wolfgang & Adele Panofsky, March 31st, 1954 (1687); Panofsky to Paul Coremans, May 21st, 1954 (1701); & Panofsky to Martin Davies, May 24th, 1954 (1702).

⁷⁰¹ Panofsky to Horst Janson, November 30th, 1954 (1728).

Sedlmayr in the new 'Vienna School' and, as Panofsky's letter to Janson indicates, the two men had enjoyed an uneasy and contentious scholarly relationship which continued into their emigration.⁷⁰² It is clear from Panofsky's correspondence that he expected these particular reviews, Pächt's especially, to be quite critical.

Held and Pächt did indeed provide extensive and detailed criticism of *Early Netherlandish Painting*. Held's review was issued in September 1955 (over two years after *Early Netherlandish Painting* was first published) and it covered a staggering thirty-nine full pages of *The Art Bulletin*.⁷⁰³ Pächt's review appeared the following year and was so detailed and comprehensive that it had to be broken down and published in two separate editions of *The Burlington Magazine*.⁷⁰⁴ Both reviewers took Panofsky to task on many individual points of detail and interpretation, ranging from stylistic attributions to iconographical identifications. Held and Pächt also took issue with Panofsky's formulation of the concept of 'concealed' or 'disguised' symbolism. The main issue, both men pointed out, was that if the theory of 'disguised symbolism' was simply taken as a matter of fact, then where would the iconographical 'interpretations' end?⁷⁰⁵ Held and Pächt were united in their concern that an uncritical acceptance of the concept of disguised symbolism would most likely lead to many gross exaggerations and ahistorical flights of fancy. As Held, in a memorable formulation, put it,

With every object potentially a carrier of a concealed meaning, there is of course a great danger that some trigger-happy iconologists may take this as an invitation to shoot from the hip. We may find ourselves in a position not unlike that of the Alexandrian Fathers who were sure that every word of the Old Testament had an allegorical sense. Like them, we may end up in wild combinations and arbitrary interpretations which we may finally justify by not much more than Tertullian's famous paradox.⁷⁰⁶

'Disguised symbolism' was, of course, an exceedingly fertile theory for the fruitful development of iconography as an art-historical *modus operandi*. With the formulation of the concept Panofsky had created, in effect, the perfect paradigm for the justification and popularisation of his own

⁷⁰² For Pächt's writing on early Netherlandish painting, see A. Blaha, 'Fritz Novotny and the New Vienna School of Art History: An Ambiguous Relation', *Journal of Art Historiography*, No.1, December 2009, http://arthistoriography.files.wordpress.com/2011/02/media_139126_en.pdf, accessed May 2nd, 2013; esp. p1.

⁷⁰³ J. Held, 'Review of *Early Netherlandish Painting*', op. cit.

⁷⁰⁴ O. Pächt, 'Panofsky's *Early Netherlandish Painting* – I', op. cit., & 'Panofsky's *Early Netherlandish Painting* – II', *The Burlington Magazine*, 98:641, August 1956, pp267-279.

⁷⁰⁵ Martin Davies voiced similar concerns in his review, *Flemish Founding Fathers*, op. cit., p57.

⁷⁰⁶ J. Held, *Review of 'Early Netherlandish Painting'*, op. cit., p212. For Pächt's comments on this point see, *Panofsky's 'Early Netherlandish Painting' – II*, op. cit., p275.

'methodology'.⁷⁰⁷ Furthermore, Pächt made the critical observation that the theory of disguised symbolism encouraged the idea that iconography in itself, i.e. the straightforward 'decoding' of pictorial symbols, was the ultimate goal of the art historian; whereas this had been only one part of the methodological procedure outlined by Panofsky in 1939. The issue, Pächt indicated, was that "iconography in a deeper sense", the *iconological* interpretation of a *deeper* symbolic meaning, would be left by the wayside as the manifest 'productivity' of iconographical 'decoding' came to be considered an end in itself - the American art historian's self-legitimation, as it were.⁷⁰⁸

Held and Pächt were among the few scholars who raised a dissenting voice to the developing hegemony of the iconographic or iconological 'method' in the 1950s.⁷⁰⁹ It is significant however, that both reviewers were also keen to point out that Panofsky was himself well aware of the perils associated with an unbridled 'enthusiasm' for iconographic interpretations of 'disguised symbolism'. Indeed, in an important section of his chapter on *Reality and Symbol*, Panofsky had written,

If every ordinary plant, architectural detail, implement, or piece of furniture could be conceived as a metaphor, so that all forms meant to convey a symbolical idea could appear as ordinary plants, architectural details, implements, or pieces of furniture: how are we to decide where the general, 'metaphorical' transfiguration of nature ends and actual, specific symbolism begins?...There is, I am afraid, no other answer to this problem than the use of historical methods tempered, if possible, by common sense. We have to ask ourselves whether or not the symbolical significance of a given motif is a matter of established representational tradition...; whether or not a symbolical interpretation can be justified by definite texts or agrees with ideas demonstrably alive in the period and presumably familiar to its artists...; and to what extent such a symbolical interpretation is in keeping with the historical position and personal tendencies of the individual master.⁷¹⁰

Once again, Panofsky stressed the need for individual scholarly discipline, or historical methods applied in a 'humanistic' spirit. It is significant that both Held and Pächt made special mention in their reviews of Panofsky's cautionary, almost premonitory proviso.⁷¹¹ Pächt also pointed out that Panofsky himself could not be charged with simply concentrating upon the more prosaic

⁷⁰⁷ As Pächt wrote, "The theory of disguised symbolism is a clear manifestation of the newly won autonomy of iconographic research." *Panofsky's 'Early Netherlandish Painting' – II*, op. cit., p276.

⁷⁰⁸ Ibid.

⁷⁰⁹ See also, C. Gilbert, *On Subject and Not-Subject in Italian Renaissance Pictures*, op. cit. In the past two or three decades Panofsky's concept of 'disguised symbolism' has been subjected to much greater critical censure. For a balanced and informative analysis of these criticisms, see, C. Harbison, *Iconography and Iconology*, op. cit.

⁷¹⁰ *Early Netherlandish Painting*, p142-3.

⁷¹¹ Held includes a lengthy quotation from this section of Panofsky's book in, *Review of 'Early Netherlandish Painting'*, op. cit., p212-3; and Pächt notes, "Needless to say Panofsky is well aware that once embarked on a search for hidden symbols it is difficult to know where to stop and he is anxious to stress the needs for safeguards." *Panofsky's 'Early Netherlandish Painting' – II*, op. cit., p275.

iconographical ‘decoding of symbols’, without any attempt whatsoever to interpret the deeper *iconological* significance of the great Flemish paintings.⁷¹² In this respect, it would seem, both critics took issue, not with Panofsky’s work *per se*, but with the abuses that could be anticipated from his methodology in the hands of less sophisticated practitioners.

The sheer size and detail of the reviews by Held and Pächt demonstrates the extent of their engagement with, and respect for, Panofsky’s work. Although these reviews did challenge many of Panofsky’s observations and pronouncements, both scholars held *Early Netherlandish Painting* in the highest regard, and both acknowledged the ultimate achievement of Panofsky’s undertaking. As Held wrote,

A review of this length would be meaningless were it not understood that this book is, and will remain, next to Friedländer’s, the great standard work in its field...[I]t is safe to predict that whoever is going to work in this field, whatever aspect of it he may choose, will owe an immeasurable debt to Erwin Panofsky.⁷¹³

And Pächt opened his review with the undoubtedly genuine encomium,

In Panofsky’s *Early Netherlandish Painting* we have the great critical synopsis of all relevant studies in this field undertaken by one who has for the last twenty-five years been himself one of the driving forces in the study of the formation and evolution of modern painting north of the Alps. Being fortunately equipped for this task through his acquaintance with practically the whole material scattered across the Old and the New World, and commanding an unrivalled erudition and an almost encyclopaedic knowledge, the author has been able to combine the comprehensiveness of a superior kind of handbook...with the incisiveness and directness of specialized enquiry that focuses both the objects and their problems at close range.⁷¹⁴

Panofsky, for his part, was quite happy, and even a little relieved, when these reviews eventually appeared. Having read Pächt’s review in the *Burlington Magazine* he informed one friend, “(It) is not quite so bad as I expected. I have the feeling of a boy who has expected to be caned but is let off with having to write fifty times: ‘I am a fool’.”⁷¹⁵ To Held, Panofsky professed himself, “grateful for the complete frankness and sincerity with which you register disagreement as well as agreement.” And after discussing some of the points on which Held had registered criticism, Panofsky graciously

⁷¹² Pächt, *ibid.*, p276.

⁷¹³ Held, *Review of ‘Early Netherlandish Painting’*, *op. cit.*, p234.

⁷¹⁴ Pächt, *Panofsky’s ‘Early Netherlandish Painting’ – I*, *op. cit.*, p110.

⁷¹⁵ Panofsky to Jan van Gelder, April 24th, 1956 (1939).

informed his younger colleague, "I shall always be grateful to you for a review from which I learned more than I can say."⁷¹⁶

Panofsky was quite prepared for points of scholarly divergence, as he well understood that this was the very nature of any properly *critical* scholarship. The émigré scholar even advised one reviewer of his *Netherlandish* book,

*"...do not believe for a moment that anything you say will 'hurt' me. I shall be quite satisfied to have elicited statements which...will serve to clarify the situation in the long run, and I am too old not to know that error is just as important a factor in history – and scholarship – as truth."*⁷¹⁷

The field of Flemish painting was a notorious minefield of individual contribution and opinion, and a large part of Panofsky's aim (and his ultimate achievement) had been to present a synthesis of this disparate literature in one comprehensive, *readable* textbook. Looking back on the whole process in 1958, when the final reviews had been dispensed, Panofsky told one correspondent,

*"If a man is bold enough to write a book of the kind I have undertaken, it is only natural that other experts will disagree on innumerable points, and in the case of my book this has led to the very amusing – and, in a sense, gratifying – result that practically every major hypothesis which I ventured to put forward has been accepted by some of my critics while being rejected, with equal fervour, by others."*⁷¹⁸

After detailing some of these positive and negative reviews, Panofsky continued,

*"In short, if I add up the positive reactions, I should be about 90 per cent right; if I should add up the negative reactions, I should be about 90 per cent wrong. So I shall settle for 45 per cent either way and am quite satisfied with that...[T]he main purpose of my book was not to solve all unsolved problems but to give a kind of general view of the subject and point out the fact that the majority of the questions still await a final answer."*⁷¹⁹

Early Netherlandish Painting was not written as a 'final', authoritative statement on the subject. Panofsky was much too sophisticated a scholar to believe that this would or could ever be possible. As he had commented whilst producing his book on Albrecht Dürer, the lives of the great artists had to be re-written anew by each generation. Panofsky maintained a deep and profound belief in the on-going, critical nature of all humanistic scholarship. Nonetheless, for some the scope and seeming comprehensiveness of Panofsky's scholarly contribution seemed overwhelming; and this was a fact

⁷¹⁶ Panofsky to Julius S. Held, October 28th, 1955 (1856).

⁷¹⁷ Panofsky to Leon Delaissé, May 21st, 1957 (2103).

⁷¹⁸ Panofsky to Karel G. Boon, October 22nd, 1957 (2138).

⁷¹⁹ Ibid.

of which Panofsky himself was well aware. When Leon M.J. Delaissé, a young reviewer, informed Panofsky he was somewhat overwhelmed by the sheer scale of accomplishment in *Early Netherlandish Painting*, Panofsky replied,

“[N]othing could be more disappointing to me than if younger people should take my word as gospel truth. I have done my best to say this many a time; but you are quite right in feeling that the very volume of the darned thing and the artillery of footnotes may give an impression of finality which no reasonable person could aim at in any field, and least of all in a field still so beset with problems as that of early Netherlandish painting and book illumination.”⁷²⁰

Panofsky was committed to the traditions of properly ‘humanistic’ scholarship, but it is worth noting the slight equivocation that has bled into this response to Delaissé. Ultimately, it would seem, Panofsky was quite pleased with himself, and with what he had achieved with *Early Netherlandish Painting*. The publication of this book, and the overwhelmingly positive reception it engendered, cemented his position as *the* major figure in American art history. Furthermore, the success of the book was itself symbolic of the discipline’s growing acceptance and establishment in the United States. Panofsky was beginning to feel more confident and assured of his position. In a rare moment of open self-satisfaction, Panofsky went on to inform Delaissé how, in reflecting upon the rich discussion engendered by *Early Netherlandish Painting*, he felt himself, “like one who has thrown a rubber bone to young lions and takes great pleasure in observing their worrying it from outside the cage.”⁷²¹

The ‘Humanities’ and the ‘Sciences’

The Norton Professorship was a symbol of Panofsky’s success and recognition in America, and, by proxy, of the growing émigré influence on the development of American art history. Nonetheless, Panofsky continued to harbour significant concerns as to the wider intellectual and academic environment in his adopted country. His concerns were centred upon how the humanities were perceived and conceived of within the American University; a topic addressed in many of his letters of the post-War period.

⁷²⁰ Panofsky to Leon Delaissé, September 10th, 1957 (2125). For Delaissé’s review see, ‘Enluminure et peinture dans les Pays-Bas. A propos du livre de E. Panofsky *Early Netherlandish Painting*’, *Scriptorium*, 11, 1957, pp109-118.

⁷²¹ Panofsky to Leon Delaissé, May 21st, 1957 (2103).

As has been noted, the sciences were the status disciplines in America; with 'science' in itself considered 'democratic'.⁷²² In this 'positivistic' environment, knowledge that had concrete, tangible application was valued above all else. 'Science' was lauded for being efficacious, for its productivity, and the emphasis within the American university was, accordingly, most often on practical, 'useful' subjects, or a technical, vocational training. Such utilitarian tendencies only intensified during the Second World War, when 'science' was manipulated for such devastating effect. A statement issued by the CAA in 1944, with the drafting of which Panofsky was involved, provides some indication of the implications such trends were thought to have had for the 'humanities':

The war has focussed attention on an issue that has existed in American education for many years. Immediate military necessity has led to technological training on a greatly extended scale. Faced with the urgent demand for this training and with serious economic insecurity, our colleges have had to curtail their program of instruction in all the 'useless' areas. In this way the tendency of American education throughout the twentieth century to become more practical and to emphasize science and vocational training has been suddenly and very rapidly accelerated...All the humanities are seriously challenged.⁷²³

As this statement makes clear, there was in America a distinct hierarchy in regards the relationship between the practical, valuable 'sciences' and the 'useless' humanities. Émigré humanists most often experienced this hierarchy in terms of a marked devaluation in status. In Germany, the humanistic disciplines had held an unquestioned cachet among the *Bildungsbürgertum*. *Kultur* and cultivation were recognised as significant qualities in their own right, and the humanist professor was duly acknowledged as a high-status individual – their standing predicated upon their *Bildung*. In the United States the idea of the singular culture-bearer, defined by their individual *cultivation*, smacked instead of a certain intellectual elitism. Besides, it was the tangible, utilitarian benefits of 'science' that were most prized in the American public conscious.

As an émigré Panofsky was certainly made aware of this new pecking order. After his two sons graduated with honours from Princeton University and established careers in meteorology and particle physics, Panofsky would often note how he was greeted by scientist colleagues as "the father of two useful sons."⁷²⁴ J. Robert Oppenheimer, Director of the IAS from 1947 onwards, has described how Panofsky was teased in this vein at his place of work. After relating how the Panofsky boys were renowned students (always first and second in their class at Princeton, they used to be referred to as "the bright Panofsky and the dumb Panofsky"), Oppenheimer pointed out that

⁷²² C. McCorkel, *Sense and Sensibility*, op. cit., p38-9.

⁷²³ 'A Statement on the Place of the History of Art in the Liberal Arts Curriculum', *College Art Journal*, 3, March 1944, pp82-7; p82.

⁷²⁴ Panofsky to Mildred and Bob Burrage, November 22nd, 1945 (1054).

scientist colleagues used to kid Panofsky senior that if his boys turned out to be no good at science, they could always fall back on the history of art.⁷²⁵ Panofsky and his wife Dora used to refer to their sons as *Die Klempner* ('the plumbers'); a flippant, though telling moniker that must have been all the more pointed in the case of Hans, whom Panofsky had at one time adjudged to be "interested in and, I think, fairly gifted for, philology and history."⁷²⁶ Each of these examples have humorous intent, of course, however they do manifest a certain truth in regards the American intellectual environment, and Panofsky's place within it.

Some American 'humanists' sought to address the popular lionisation of 'science' by issuing heartfelt defences of and apologies for the humanistic disciplines. In 1939 Abraham Flexner, for example, lectured on *The Usefulness of Useless Knowledge*⁷²⁷; and, as has been shown, T.M. Greene also made great efforts to publicly broach questions regarding the purpose and role of the humanities in American life.⁷²⁸ Many humanist scholars in America adopted unremittingly defensive positions, and Gilbert Chinard, (a fellow contributor to Greene's symposium on *The Meaning of the Humanities*) seemed to speak for many when he declared "(T)he humanities are attacked on every side; they are losing ground every day; the host of their enemies is legion and their defenders a mere handful."⁷²⁹ The jeremiads of the embattled American humanists scholars became all the more pronounced during the War years.⁷³⁰

Panofsky, of course, knew well and had worked alongside many of these prominent American 'humanists', and the émigré's own concerns with the place of humanistic learning and scholarship in America should be understood in this context. Panofsky would often complain, for example, of the dearth of interest in, and lack of funding for 'humanists' and the humanistic disciplines. As he informed one correspondent about the difficulty of securing a place for the émigré philologist Ernst Kapp,

⁷²⁵ *See it Now*, 'Ed Murrow in Conversation with Dr J. Robert Oppenheimer', CBS television programme broadcast January 4th, 1955 (catalogue id - T76:0013).

⁷²⁶ Panofsky to Charles Rufus Morey, March 1st, 1934 (440).

⁷²⁷ A. Flexner, 'The Usefulness of Useless Knowledge', *Harper's Magazine*, 179, June/November 1939, pp544-552.

⁷²⁸ As well as *The Meaning of the Humanities* (1938), the symposium and publication to which Panofsky contributed, Greene issued in 1944, *Liberal Education Re-examined: Its Role in a Democracy*, a book whose title speaks for itself.

⁷²⁹ G. Chinard, 'Literature and the Humanities', *The Meaning of the Humanities*, op. cit., pp153-170; p153.

⁷³⁰ See, for example, 'Norman Foerster ed., *The Humanities After the War*, 1942; 'The Humanities and the War: a Survey of Opinion on a Proposal to Act to Preserve the Study of the Humanities', various authors, *College English*, 4:5, February 1943, pp313-317; W. E. Farrison, 'Humanities vs. War', *Phylon*, 5:4, 1944, pp334-338; B. Brownell, 'The Value of the Humanities', *The Journal of Higher Education*, 16:8, November 1945, pp405-412; B.L. Ullman, 'What Are the Humanities?', *The Journal of Higher Education*, 17:6, June 1946, pp301-7 & p337.

*“That he has been unable to find a position even approximately adequate to his status is not his fault but is due to the well-known and much lamented decline of interest in humanistic studies in general and classical scholarship in particular...and the almost total eclipse of these studies in war time.”*⁷³¹

Towards the end of the War Panofsky also complained to Booth Tarkington that his mind was completely blank and he was unable to work, “owing to the hopeless aspect of the newspapers, on the one hand (and) the equally hopeless plight of the humanities on the other.”⁷³² Even within the IAS, Panofsky felt that the place of the humanities was increasingly challenged. Writing to Fritz Saxl to tell him of the difficulties he had in keeping their mutual friend Hanns Swarzenski in employment, Panofsky confided,

*“...the situation at the Institute, too, becomes fishier and fishier. The Trustees – and, I am afraid, also Aydelotte [Director of the IAS]...seem quite decided to let the humanities go to hell in favour of mathematics, for which they have respect on account of incomprehensibility, and economics which they naively presume to be useful. Vacancies are not filled, the age limit rules are vigorously applied (both Herzfeld and Lowe⁷³³ are out, while mathematicians are kept on!), and the reappointment of everyone not on permanent tenure has to be approved by the whole faculty and the Director as soon as his stay exceeds two years...My own influence with the Institute diminishes steadily and...I shall [soon] find myself alone in a world filled with Trustees, mathematicians, economists and an unknown Director presumably nominated by the latter.”*⁷³⁴

Panofsky's concerns endured well into the 1950s. In 1951 he would still acknowledge the “great enmity” that persisted in America between the ‘humanities’ and the ‘sciences’⁷³⁵; and in 1953, whilst providing a reference for Paul Friedländer, Panofsky stated that this émigré philologist “would be an excellent choice” because he could “still arouse that enthusiasm for the humanities in the widest possible sense which is so sorely needed right now.”⁷³⁶

For Panofsky, one of the particularly negative ramifications vis-à-vis the sciences/humanities hierarchy in America was the way in which ‘humanists’ would often attempt to appropriate the positivistic standards of their colleagues within the ‘sciences’. The American scholar Samuel Cauman provides some insight into how this ‘scientific’ *Weltanschauung* impinged upon the discipline of art history in the mid-1940s:

⁷³¹ Panofsky to Betty Drury, June 23rd, 1943 (903).

⁷³² Panofsky to Booth Tarkington, October 31st, 1945 (1045).

⁷³³ Ernst Herzfeld, German émigré archaeologist and Elias E. Lowe, a Russian-American palaeographer, were both ‘Humanists’ at the IAS.

⁷³⁴ Panofsky to Saxl, March 8th, 1946 (1074).

⁷³⁵ Panofsky to Udo von Alvensleben, December 27th, 1951 (1511).

⁷³⁶ Panofsky to Harry J. Carman, January 12th, 1953 (1571).

If the trend towards scientific education is permanent, as I believe it is, the answer is not to fight science but to come to terms with it, perhaps even to surrender...If there is a conflict between scientific and liberal education, as both are now conducted, something is wrong, and not necessarily with science...It is characteristic of our writing about art, literature and music that the theories we develop can rarely be shown to be either right or wrong. Our theories cannot be tested. They are so abstract and have so little direct bearing that, to be understood, they must be interpreted. On the other hand, it is characteristic of useful theories that they can be tested, shown to be either right or wrong. Any other kind of theory is scientifically valueless...A sound science of art history will bring within the scope of positive knowledge facts about the organisation of phenomena.⁷³⁷

It is, in fact, the case that Panofsky's own 'iconographical' method was taken up by many American practitioners in this 'positivistic' fashion. As Colin Eisler has pointed out,

America seized iconography as scientific and disciplined, preferable to the sentimental Ruskinian morality of a Charles Eliot Norton, more accessible than the daunting native genius of a Henry Adams, less convoluted than the untranslatable theories of the Vienna school... There was the feeling that if only one knew enough texts, the hardest pictorial codes could be cracked.⁷³⁸

For an eager American studentship, the 'factual' or 'empirical' verification of iconographic identifications through recourse to specific textual sources seemed to offer the possibility of dealing confidently with tangible art-historical 'facts'. Somewhat akin to detective work, it appeared to provide the justification and rationale for a productive, pragmatic, even 'democratic', discipline of art history.⁷³⁹

The emphasis upon the more 'factual' and classificatory side of 'iconography' however, meant that in practice the more interpretive and speculative 'iconology' was often left by the wayside. In this positivistic environment Panofsky became increasingly dissatisfied with the way his 'method' was being utilised and implemented. In *Studies in Iconology* the émigré scholar had pointed out that the art historian could not simply content himself with iconographical identification or classification.⁷⁴⁰ Indeed, for Panofsky it was at the level of Iconological *interpretation* that the history of art actually became a *humanistic* discipline.⁷⁴¹ In the 1940s he felt compelled to reiterate this point in even stronger terms:

⁷³⁷ S. Cauman, *The Science of Art History*, op. cit.

⁷³⁸ C. Eisler, 'Panofsky and his Peers in a Warburgian Psyche Glass', *Notes in the History of Art*, 4:2/3, winter/spring, 1985, pp85-88; p86-7.

⁷³⁹ For this point see the quotation from Irving Lavin on p3, n.12.

⁷⁴⁰ *Studies in Iconology*, p17.

⁷⁴¹ *Ibid*, p16.

“[The] collecting of unknown or little known material, however indispensable, must be regarded as secondary, and even its scholarly classification and coordination with respect to time, place, school, etc., is not an end in itself. The history of art has reached what may be called its ‘interpretive’ stage...(T)he historian of art must study the literature of the periods in which he is interested and enlist the services of all the other historical disciplines; he is, on the other hand, ready to reciprocate such services in proportion as these other disciplines also operate on an ‘interpretive’ level.”⁷⁴²

In *Studies in Iconology* Panofsky had designated the more documentary, classificatory side of his ‘method’ as “iconographical analysis in the narrower sense of the word”, and the interpretive level as “iconographical interpretation in a deeper sense”. This was most likely done in order to make the interpretive nature of his art-historical programme more ‘digestible’ for an American audience unresponsive to any form of theoretical speculation. However, when he realised the manner in which his ‘method’ was being interpreted he was compelled to make the distinction far more explicit. In a public lecture in 1946, entitled *What is Iconology?*, for example, Panofsky stated:

While ‘iconography’, as commonly understood, limits itself to a purely descriptive and statistical survey of motifs, primarily intended to facilitate the dating and location of works of art, ‘iconology’ attempts to interpret those motifs in several ways: first, with an eye on their genesis and interpenetration as opposed to a mere description; second, with an eye on the general intellectual context (religious, philosophical, political, etc.) within which the various motifs came into being and were developed.⁷⁴³

Panofsky wanted to reemphasise the fact that ‘iconography’ on its own, was limited and provisional. It provided a necessary but preliminary groundwork for ‘iconology’. It was at the level of *iconology* that the art historian was involved with the elucidation of what Panofsky referred to as ‘intrinsic meaning’. It was at this *interpretive* level that the ‘humanistic disciplines’ met on a common plane, and so the ‘humanistic’ disciplines, by their very nature, had to be recognised to be speculative and theoretical pursuits. They could never conform to any naïve notion of ‘scientific objectivity’. As Christine Hasenmueller notes in her perceptive critique of Panofsky’s ‘method’,

[Panofsky] profoundly recognised that not all of that which humanists wish to understand is investigable in accordance with the ‘scientific’ criteria of investigation and verifiability that tend to be readily accepted in our [American] intellectual climate...But he also envisioned the tragic result that would follow attempts to

⁷⁴² E. Panofsky, *Report on Activities of the Institute for Advanced Study in the History of Art*, April 15th, 1941 (823B).

⁷⁴³ This lecture was delivered at the Frick Collection in New York City on October 26th, 1946. For Panofsky’s, ‘Brief Outline of Talk ‘What is Iconology?’’, see D. Wuttke, *Erwin Panofsky: Korrespondenz*, Band II, 2003, p1133.

subordinate a humanistic concern for meaning to implicit and often naïve notions of the criteria for ‘scientific’ validity. An undefined, uncritical popularity of the ideal of ‘scientific’ truth could – and did – lead to avoidance of problems that were inherently inimical to concrete modes of investigation. Such curtailing of the scope of humanistic inquiry in order to accommodate it to these unspoken values could not make art history a science, but it could well sap its vitality as a humanistic discipline.⁷⁴⁴

Panofsky remained acutely mindful, throughout his American career, of the misrepresentations of his ‘methodology’ in the hands of others. In 1956, for example, when asked by one scholar to clarify “the line of demarcation between iconography and iconology”, Panofsky replied,

*“When I am asked about the difference between iconography and iconology I always say that the answer depends on the attitude of him who gives it: if he is benevolent he would say that iconography is to iconology as ethnography is to ethnology; if he is less benevolent he would say that it is as astrology is to astrology.”*⁷⁴⁵

The point Panofsky seems to have been restating here was that for realistic practitioners the descriptive and classificatory ‘iconography’ would be recognised as a preliminary stage, laying the requisite groundwork for iconological interpretation. However, for those less inclined to embrace the theoretical implications of any historical *interpretation*, ‘iconology’ would be deemed so speculative, so detached from any ‘empirical reality’, as to be rendered ‘useless’ or even ‘nonsensical’.

Panofsky also acknowledged that there was the danger that iconological interpretations could be *too* speculative and too fanciful if not informed by a requisitely detailed and sedulous ‘iconographical’ research. Having encountered some far-fetched iconological interpretations in an art-historical journal, for example, Panofsky wrote to Ernst Gombrich,

*“(W)e quite agree on...the dangers of ‘iconology’. When good old Ragnar Josephson recently favoured me with the three last issues of the ‘Tidskrift för Konstvetenskap’...I answered that, with all due admiration for many of the contributions, I could not help feeling a bit like Goethe’s sorcerer’s apprentice (or, in view of Warburg and Saxl, an apprentice of a sorcerer’s apprentice).”*⁷⁴⁶

⁷⁴⁴ C. Hasenmueller, ‘Panofsky, Iconography, and Semiotics’, *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*, 36:3, Spring 1978, 289-301; p296-7.

⁷⁴⁵ Panofsky to K.E. Steneberg, July 12th, 1956 (1966).

⁷⁴⁶ Panofsky to Gombrich, September 24th, 1957 (2131). For Gombrich’s own concerns regarding the “dangers of iconology”, see E. Gombrich, ‘The Aims and Limits of Iconology’, in *Symbolic Images*, 1972, pp1-25.

Towards the end of his life Panofsky would even note how “iconology has entered a kind of Mannerist phase which evidences both the successes and the dangers of what we have all been trying to do during the last few decades.”⁷⁴⁷

Panofsky's discontent with the implementation of his 'methodology' is evident in a letter to the Dutch iconographer Henri van de Waal. When Panofsky read van de Waal's own essay on 'Iconography' and 'Iconology' he felt compelled to write to this Leiden based scholar,

“I have seldom felt such a vivid impression of what the old slogan ‘hands across the sea’ may mean...In reading what you say about iconology, I felt precisely like a crew trying to build a tunnel must feel when it hears the sound of those who have started to dig from the opposite end...You can hardly know that you lent me aid and comfort in a really critical moment...I myself gave, just two weeks ago, a public lecture on the subject ‘What is Iconology?’ which, as you can imagine, agreed almost verbatim with what you so impressively state...[W]e are in agreement: every method, as you so rightly say, depends for its success upon the spirit in which it is applied.”⁷⁴⁸

This letter provides some indication of Panofsky's frustration with the abuses of his 'methodology' in America.⁷⁴⁹ On the one hand he was obviously very much alarmed by some of the wildly speculative 'interpretations' that were being proffered in the name of 'iconology'. But on the other hand, he was deeply dissatisfied with the fact that many American practitioners seemed to content themselves with more programmatic and formulaic iconographical identifications. For Panofsky it was the balance between the detailed, examinatory, 'empirical' side of scholarship and the more theoretical, speculative and *interpretive* side, which really conditioned properly disciplined or *wissenschaftliche* art-historical study. For Panofsky it was the humanistic scholar who was self-conscious and critical in acknowledging and handling this balance; this was the 'spirit' in which iconological scholarship had to be carried out.

Ultimately for Panofsky, the hierarchy in America that saw practitioners in historical disciplines acquiesce to a naively positivistic notion of scientific 'objectivity' did not simply undermine the vitality of humanistic inquiry; it rested upon an altogether facile and unsatisfactory understanding of 'science' itself. Whereas many American educators sought to define the humanities *in distinction to* the sciences (contributing, in the process, to a rather murky and ill-defined notion of 'humanism'⁷⁵⁰)

⁷⁴⁷ Panofsky to Guy de Tervarent, February 14th, 1966 (AAA).

⁷⁴⁸ Panofsky to Henri van de Waal, November 20th, 1946 (1113). Van de Waal had sent Panofsky his *Traditie en bezieling. Rede uitgesproken bij de aanvaarding van het ambt van buitengewoon hoogleraar in de kunstgeschiedenis aan de Rijksuniversiteit te Leiden op 22 Maart 1946*, 1946.

⁷⁴⁹ Van de Waal, for his part, empathised with Panofsky's struggles in America. Henri van de Waal to Panofsky, December 31st, 1947 (1191).

⁷⁵⁰ See, for example J. David Hoeveler, *The New Humanism: A Critique of Modern America, 1900-1940*, 1977.

Panofsky believed the humanities and the sciences should be understood instead as “sisters”, two *complementary* aspects of that holistic conception of *Wissenschaft*.⁷⁵¹ In this respect he evoked that *Aufklärung* definition of scholarship, dating back to Kant and Humboldt, in which both the sciences and the humanities were conceived of as searching and speculative pursuits, research based, and attending to no immediately practical or utilitarian function. In the Cassirer-ian understanding of *Symbolic Forms* too, both scientific and humanistic knowledge were understood, in a fundamental sense, as man-made fields. Together they constituted that human effort to, quite literally, ‘make sense’ of the world; or, to put it another way, to create cosmos from chaos. As human constructions, or ‘symbolic forms’, both the sciences and the humanities had to be recognised as temporal fields, bound to change, revision and reinterpretation.⁷⁵² Science, understood in these terms, did not simply deal with concrete certainties, with empirical ‘facts’, or with a tangible, verifiable ‘reality’. It too was involved, at a fundamental level, with the construction of a ‘theoretical’ knowledge.

In the years after the War Panofsky was gratified that developments in quantum theory seemed to endorse his deeply held ‘humanistic’ views. Panofsky was well informed on quantum theory. He often discussed quantum matters in his correspondence with his son Wolfgang, and at the IAS he worked in close proximity to some of the foremost minds in theoretical physics. Alongside Albert Einstein (a family friend of the Panofskys), John von Neumann was a permanent member of the IAS faculty, while Abraham Pais, Niels Bohr, and Wolfgang Pauli all enjoyed memberships at the IAS during the middle decades of the twentieth century. John Wheeler was a Professor at Princeton University, as well as the Panofskys’ next door neighbour on Battle Road, and Erwin Schrödinger was also a regular visitor to Princeton where he would work with Einstein.⁷⁵³ Panofsky was acquainted with many of these important ‘scientists’, and in his letters from the forties and fifties he often discussed the implications of their ground-breaking research. Panofsky was keen to point out that the new discoveries and theories of quantum physics demonstrated that the methodological problems of ‘scientists’ were not actually all that far removed from those of their humanist counterparts.⁷⁵⁴ As he told his son Wolfgang,

“...the whole idea of quantum theory and other related doctrines according to which natura facit saltus instead of proceeding continuously...is very gratifying to an old

⁷⁵¹ *The History of Art as a Humanistic Discipline*, op. cit., p117.

⁷⁵² It was Einstein’s *Theory of Relativity*, and its undermining of the long-held ‘certainties’ of Newtonian Physics that helped concretise for Cassirer the idea that ‘science’ was but one more ‘symbolic form’. E. Cassirer, *Einstein’s Theory of Relativity*, op. cit.

⁷⁵³ For details of the work of these physicists in Princeton see Regis, *Who Got Einstein’s Office?*, op. cit.

⁷⁵⁴ This was an idea Panofsky had addressed already in *The History of Art as a Humanistic Discipline*, op. cit., p96.

humanist...for this too chimes with my old scepticism...of an 'evolution' in history which leaves no room for 'events'."⁷⁵⁵

In 1957 Panofsky then informed one correspondent,

*"I feel that the situation in our humanistic disciplines resembles somewhat that in modern physics where, it seems, a kind of complementarity between apparently mutually exclusive theories is beginning to be accepted. The physicists have found out that the observer inevitably disturbs the phenomena which he observes, that is to say, that the very way in which he constructs his experimental apparatus pre-establishes, not so much the answer which he expects from his experiment, as the terms in which this answer is given. A physicist experimenting with light phenomena will receive his answers in terms of the wave theory if he constructs his apparatus without movable parts, and in terms of the quantum theory if he constructs it with movable parts. Both answers may be correct and have to be taken into consideration; but he cannot obtain them both at the same time. He has in other words, to approach every phenomenon with different sets of experimental equipment; he has to expect answers which seem to be mutually exclusive; and he has yet to accept both these answers as aspects of one truth which later generations may or may not be able to reduce to one formula. So, it seems to me, the historian will necessarily get the answers in terms pre-established by his questions, and he must resign himself to the fact that these questions depend upon his personal equipment as well as on the specific nature of the problem."*⁷⁵⁶

This was obviously an issue to which Panofsky devoted a great deal of thought. In this detailed and considered letter to his younger 'humanist' colleague, he went on to explain how, in the relation of 'facts' to 'theories', the scientist and the humanist shared many points of methodological correspondence:

"If an architectural historian attempts to trace the development of, let us say, the choir with ambulatory radiating chapels from St.-Denis to Beauvais, he will be able to get a very reasonable (that is to say, irreversible) 'development' by arranging the chief examples in chronological order. And I for one am convinced that the results will not be greatly affected if he includes in his investigation those hundreds of small country churches which may either retain an 'older' type or adapt the 'great innovation' to regional or local traditions. On the other hand, if said architectural historian concentrates upon one of the great monuments, he will find that even here the ultimate result may have been conditioned, in fact, necessitated, by perfectly unique and abnormal circumstances, such as the presence of the eleventh-century foundations in Chartres which had to be reused or the necessity of respecting an ancient right-of-way which forced the architect to restrict the protrusion of the eastern chapel. And yet, while the individual case is, strictly speaking, unpredictable,

⁷⁵⁵ Panofsky to Wolfgang Panofsky, August 20th, 1945 (1028).

⁷⁵⁶ Panofsky to Leon M.J. Delaissé, September 10th, 1957 (2125).

*the 'development' as a whole can be perfectly understandable from the point of view of not predetermination but consistency in retrospect...(H)ere again there is a curious analogy with science: no one can predict what one atom will do under given circumstances; but it can very well be predicted what an agglomeration of ten billions of atoms will do under given circumstances."*⁷⁵⁷

As a result of his contact with the many important theoretical physicists working in Princeton, Panofsky became increasingly confident that many scientists, the 'good ones' at least, were cognisant that their work was, in many regards, akin to (or at least complimented by) that of their humanist colleagues. In 1959 Panofsky told one colleague,

*"To be quite frank, it amazes me that there are still people who believe that humanistic methods should be abandoned in favour of 'scientific' ones. This is a point of view which all the really good scientists whom I have ever met are the first to reject. On the contrary, what strikes me as the most remarkable, and in a sense, most hopeful development in our problematic age is the very fact that the scientists, having been forced to change so many of their cherished axioms and having been shaken by the many 'indeterminacies' resulting from the structure of matter itself, as well as from the inevitable influence of the observer on the thing observed, have become profoundly modest and insist on the idea that, to quote Wolfgang Pauli, present day physics is no longer able to give a complete picture of the world and represents only a complementary aspect of an investigation the other aspect of which is the humanistic method of acquiring knowledge."*⁷⁵⁸

Similarly, he could write to his fellow IAS faculty member, the classicist Lily Ross Taylor,

*"(H)umanism will survive, I trust, Stalin, Truman and television...(I)n my experience, one of the most hopeful aspects of the situation is that now the scientists, at least the good ones, are again prepared to speak and listen to the humanists. Their own methodical and human problems are no longer so different from ours as it appeared some 40 or 50 years ago, and they are prepared to look upon the past with which we humanists are concerned in a spirit of humility rather than condescension."*⁷⁵⁹

The momentous developments in theoretical physics provided Panofsky with some cause for optimism in terms of challenging that hierarchy which persisted in America, in the popular mind at least, between the 'sciences' and the humanities.

Wolfgang Pauli was one of the most renowned names in the field of quantum physics, and a close friend of the Panofskys. He had been a colleague at Hamburg University, and was then also positioned at the IAS, for two spells, first in the mid-thirties and then again in the early forties. In

⁷⁵⁷ Ibid.

⁷⁵⁸ Panofsky to Kurt von Fritz, December 2nd, 1959 (2424).

⁷⁵⁹ Panofsky to Lily Ross Taylor, November 5th, 1951 (1491).

1945 Einstein nominated Pauli for the Nobel Prize. Upon receiving the Prize Pauli was honoured at a dinner in Princeton. Einstein spoke on this occasion, on the scope and achievement of Pauli's work, and Panofsky was also invited to say a few words. As a close friend of Pauli, Panofsky's role was to offer a more personal note to the proceedings. However, he also used his speech to address the dichotomy he had encountered in America between 'the humanities' and 'the sciences'. Panofsky began by stressing the gaping distance that seemed to separate the 'scientist' and the 'humanist':

On a purely factual plane the humanist can learn but little from his scientific friends. He might want to read what they write; but he would not be able to understand it, unless they charitably condescend to the general public or a public of generals. The scientists, on the other hand, might be quite capable of understanding what the humanist writes; but they would not want to read it.

Panofsky then went on to suggest ways in which the scientist and the humanist could, and indeed should, establish a common ground:

On a more fundamental – and, at the same time, more human – plane, however, the twain can meet and exchange their experiences...There are, after all, problems so general that they affect all human efforts to transform chaos into cosmos, however much these efforts may differ in subject matter. The humanist, too, finds himself faced – once he attempts to think about what he is doing – with such questions as: the changing significance of spatial and temporal data within different frames of reference; the delicate relationship between the phenomenon and the 'instrument' (which, in the case of the humanist, is represented by the 'document'); the continuous and/or discontinuous structure of the processes which we light-heartedly call 'historical evolution'. In matters like these the humanist can and does receive help from the scientist. But in conversation with a man like Pauli he receives much more. He gains the assurance of a community of interests, even a community of destiny...(I)t is with this in mind that a humanist, however small, may greet a scientist, however great, as a colleague.⁷⁶⁰

Panofsky was pointing out here that there are certain fundamental methodological considerations which underlie all human inquiry, all efforts to transform 'chaos' into 'cosmos'. When the humanist and the scientist recognised this fact they acknowledged the parity or the correspondence in their work. The congruence lay in the fact that both the humanist and the scientist had to openly acknowledge and confront the hermeneutical problems they faced in the construction of 'knowledge'. At the root of both scientific and humanistic inquiry, in the establishment of *any* relationships between 'facts' and 'theories', there existed a methodical bind. As Panofsky had

⁷⁶⁰ E. Panofsky, Speech in Honour of Wolfgang Pauli, delivered in Fuld Hall, Institute for Advanced Study, Princeton, on December 10th, 1945. Reprinted in D. Wuttke, *Erwin Panofsky: Korrespondenz*, Band II, pp681-684, (1061B).

pointed out in *The History of Art as a Humanistic Discipline*, this was not a *vicious*, but a *methodical* circle.⁷⁶¹ In a German-language essay written in 1932 Panofsky had also made a comparison between this methodical circle and the “old joke about the balancing pole”:

‘Father, why does the tightrope walker not fall down?’ ‘Because he holds on to the balancing pole!’ ‘But why does the balancing pole not fall down?’ ‘Silly boy, because he holds on to it firmly!’ The punch line is that the alleged vicious circle does not foreclose the possibility of tightrope walking but facilitates it.⁷⁶²

In 1955 Panofsky would refer to this “old story about the tightrope walker” still, as “the true model of scientific and scholarly pursuits.”⁷⁶³ It was imperative, Panofsky believed, that the scholar, be they scientist *or* humanist, thought critically about what it was they were *doing*, and that they acknowledged the “organic situation” involved in their creation of knowledge.⁷⁶⁴ It was this responsibility, this self-imposed scholarly discipline (*Wissenschaft*) that determined the cogency, the validity and the authority of one’s individual contribution to knowledge.⁷⁶⁵ This was the ‘humanistic’ *spirit* that Panofsky believed could, and indeed should, be shared by both the scientist *and* the humanist.

American education

It was Panofsky’s opinion that a large number of the American graduates opting to follow a scholarly career were not properly equipped with the requisite ‘humanistic attitude’. As he relayed to one correspondent in 1950, for example, “The problem of humanism – and even the humanities – is to develop humanists.”⁷⁶⁶ Indeed, Panofsky had grave concerns in regards the makeup and constitution of the American educational system, and these concerns reflect the continuing issues of acculturation that he faced as an émigré scholar.

In 1945 Panofsky told the President of one American college,

“As a humanist and, bad though that sounds to modern ears, a specialist, I am not very familiar – in fact a trifle at odds – with the general theory of education; but,

⁷⁶¹ *The History of Art as a Humanistic Discipline*, op. cit., p100.

⁷⁶² *On the Problem of Describing and Interpreting Works of the Visual Arts*, op. cit., p478, n.16.

⁷⁶³ Panofsky to Wolfgang Schöne, January 13th, 1955 (1746).

⁷⁶⁴ *The History of Art as a Humanistic Discipline*, op. cit., p100.

⁷⁶⁵ For historical discussion of the relationship between the sciences and the humanities, with reference to Panofsky’s thoughts, see D. Wuttke, ‘From the Laboratory of a Cultural Historian: On Contacts between Mathematics, Science, the Humanities, and the Arts’, *Publications of the Institute of Germanic Studies*, 86, 2005, pp11-38.

⁷⁶⁶ Panofsky to Charles S. Johnson, July 23rd, 1950 (1381).

being nevertheless a schoolmaster at heart, I have given some thought to my own experience as a teacher on both sides of the Atlantic...When confronted with a group of students...we (the professors) are perplexed by the uncertainty as to what and how much can be taken for granted. Will an allusion to a passage from Shakespeare, or from Virgil, or even from the Bible, be lost on them without explicit reference or, God forbid, longwinded explanation? Can we be sure they will know Mercury, not only as a synonym of quicksilver but also as a classical God to whom several things were sacred and have happened? Must we tell them in ever so many words who Democritus was, or Aristotle, or Keats, or Lavoisier, or Saint Bernard?"⁷⁶⁷

This might, on first reflection, seem a somewhat crabby grumble from an exceptionally learned scholar. However, for an émigré such as Panofsky, this deficiency in the American studentship had serious implications. As Thomas Crow has pointed out,

European professors...found their new American charges lacking the level of erudition they would have assumed in their European counterparts...Thus they tended to prune away many of the more complex and speculative elements of [their work].⁷⁶⁸

In the United States, the émigré scholar soon discovered that it was the role of the college professor to impart a more general knowledge. The emphasis at American institutions of higher learning was on instruction and education of students, and American undergraduates expected to be taught 'the facts'. The American professor acted, in effect, as guarantor of an authenticated knowledge.

Such an approach was reflective of the 'democratic' deportment in America. However it was a far step removed from the émigrés' understanding of the role of a 'university'. The German university had been devoted, first and foremost, to research and the advancement of knowledge. The ideal was that the German professors be dedicated to their own research, and that this work would form the basis of their teaching. Any general knowledge would be taken for granted from a studentship that was informed, independent and self-responsible on account of their experience at the *Gymnasium*. By focussing their teaching on specialised problems of their own research, the German professor would, in effect, treat his students as active participants in the process of scholarly inquiry. University students would thus develop an understanding of the more complex theoretical and methodological issues that characterised such research. Through the living example of active scholarship German university students were given an insight into the processes through which individuals contributed to the creation of 'knowledge'. Beyond 'facts' they were taught the habit of scholarly accountability and discipline (*Wissenschaft*). It was this kind of independent and responsible attitude that Panofsky believed so important to the development of properly 'critical',

⁷⁶⁷ Panofsky to Harold Taylor, November 22nd, 1945 (1055).

⁷⁶⁸ T. Crow, 'The Practice of Art History in America', *Daedalus*, 135:2, spring 2006, pp70-91, p77.

'humanistic' scholarship. This was the sense of autonomy and self-development that was central to the humanist ideal of *Bildung*. And it was this spirit, this 'attitude', that Panofsky found lacking in the average American student.

Panofsky was not alone in his concerns. As ever, he found a sympathetic colleague in Charles Rufus Morey, who also believed that the average American college student was woefully undereducated in comparison to their European counterparts. In 1943, Morey even made the point in print,

How many of our undergraduates know enough Greek to read the plays of Aeschylus or the odes of Pindar? How much will they learn of the uncanny clarity of the Hellenic mind through modern versions of the Greek historians?... (T)he historical perspective which is more or less the inheritance of the European boy or girl... is so conspicuously lacking in the American without university or college training, and, one grieves to say, to very many who are said to have had it.⁷⁶⁹

After the war other émigré scholars began to issue their own tentative criticisms of the educational environment they had encountered in the United States. Richard Krautheimer, for example, penned an essay in which he pointed out, "The aims of higher education in the United States, and its place in society, differ from their European counterparts not so much in degree as in kind."⁷⁷⁰ Krautheimer, like his friend Panofsky, believed that a *Gymnasium* education "laid a common intellectual foundation." However, as an émigré he too was compelled to point out that,

The American high school tends to substitute for the mastery of a common body of knowledge the adoption of a number of basic attitudes in which all its graduates will concur... [H]ow small is the common basis of knowledge, method, and approach which high school graduates bring to college?⁷⁷¹

Krautheimer then stressed that this difference in early education had a knock-on effect at the higher level, turning the University into a centre for training and vocational preparation:

As a result, the college may have to take over a function which the high school is not in a position to fulfil... A basic curriculum in the first years is the solution towards which many colleges appear to be inclining... (It is the role of the American institution of higher learning to) transmit to its students a common body of general knowledge concerning both the past and the present... At the same time the college must prepare its students not so much for any specific occupation as for all those occupations which college graduates are apt to enter without much further training;

⁷⁶⁹ C.R. Morey, 'The Fine Arts in Higher Education', *College Art Journal*, 3:1, November 1943, pp2-10; p4-5.

⁷⁷⁰ R. Krautheimer, 'Higher Education Here and Abroad', *Vassar Alumni Magazine*, October 15th, 1945, 31:1, pp5-7; p5.

⁷⁷¹ *Ibid.*, p5-6.

jobs in business and industry, as research assistants and journalists, and in a hundred other fields...⁷⁷²

Leo Spitzer, the Austrian philologist, also broached the concerns of many émigré scholars in America with his speech *The Formation of the American Humanist*.⁷⁷³ According to Spitzer,

The lack of young scholars able to perpetuate a venerable [humanist] tradition may be traced to the school and college background of our graduate students, to conditions of their life as graduates, and to the academic life of the young PhD.⁷⁷⁴

Spitzer fondly recalled how his teachers at the *Gymnasium* had presented the life of a Socrates or a Goethe, “as the noblest that a man could live, a life of spiritual pursuits rather than of material welfare or technical accomplishment.” These teachers themselves, Spitzer noted, “stood as convincing exponents of the life of the *clerc*.”⁷⁷⁵ In a resolute defence of the *vita contemplativa*, this émigré scholar asserted,

It is only the spirit of relative distanciation from daily life and its technical fight for self-assertion which will breed the humanist scholar. For him the act of understanding (understanding types of man different from himself, understanding other nationalities, civilisations or personalities) is all-important: but understanding requires undeflected attention and undivided loyalty, it is an exacting, lonely activity impossible of attainment for a person engulfed in the ocean of trivialities that surrounds him in contemporary daily life. The humanist should live among his fellow men and not lose contact with them because otherwise he would no longer be humane – but he should live somewhat removed from them.⁷⁷⁶

Spitzer was also keen to point out to his American audience that the concern with a so-called ‘useless’ knowledge within the *Gymnasium* had not been to the detriment of any of his fellow classmates who had not pursued an academic career:

[I]n spite of their education by ‘clercs’ as ‘clercs’, they were nonetheless quite successful in outward practical life. Most of them reached high distinction, not only as doctors and lawyers, but as officers and merchants – and it was not bad for the prosperous grain merchant among them to carry with him, in a corner of his mind, the ancient adage learnt at college: *Omnia mea mecum porto*.⁷⁷⁷

Echoing Panofsky’s concerns, Spitzer criticised the American educational system for its failure to provide graduate students with the opportunity to develop as properly self-responsible, self-

⁷⁷² Ibid.

⁷⁷³ L. Spitzer, ‘The Formation of the American Humanist’, *PMLA*, 66:1, February 1951, pp39-48.

⁷⁷⁴ Ibid., p39.

⁷⁷⁵ Ibid., 40.

⁷⁷⁶ Ibid.

⁷⁷⁷ Ibid.

motivated, 'humanist' scholars. As one would perhaps expect though, Spitzer, conscious of his émigré status, presented his criticisms with tact and diplomacy:

The amount of guidance given to our graduates by their teachers reflects a humane, selfless attitude on the part of the latter, consonant with the goodhearted helpfulness of the American national character, for which no praise is excessive. In no country have I seen so much love and care, energy and time spent in advising and teaching students, so much anticipation of their difficulties, so much pedagogical adaptation to their standards...Never does an American university professor show impatience when forced to interrupt his scholarly work to come to the help of a student who brings him a German sentence because it has a dependent clause, never will the professor tire in giving personalised information of the most trivial kind to new students, information which any older student could give to them. A German professor is...a terror-inspiring monster in comparison, without the slightest concern for the convenience of the student. On the other hand, it is a question whether the overdosage of guidance does not defeat its purpose by atrophying the mental muscles of the student and does not lower the university to the level of a vocational training-school. How can we expect originality of scholarly opinion and independence of thought from students who cannot make up their minds by themselves concerning their schedules and their way of studying?⁷⁷⁸

After describing his own enlightening, though exacting, experience learning from the active scholarly example of the great Swiss philologist Meyer-Lübke, Spitzer pointed out that, as a university student, what he had been given was,

...the vision of scholarship: facts can be learned in the rest of our career, but only once in our lives does the opportunity of the vision come, without which one must be a poor scholar indeed. In contrast to this picture, it strikes me that such a personal experience is found more rarely in our days...with American students who, accordingly, are tempted to consider their teacher rather as an instructor whose influence is restricted to their special field, rather than as a proponent of the scholarly life, and to see in their graduate years rather a necessary period of transition in which the tricks of the trade must be learned, than a lasting mode of living, as embodied in their teachers, than which there is none more philosophical.⁷⁷⁹

In conclusion, Spitzer expressed criticisms that resonated most harmoniously with Panofsky's own:

Predominant concern with teaching, with its emphasis on the presentation of well-known facts, will of course in the long run blunt the sense of scholarly adventure which leads to the discovery of new truths.⁷⁸⁰

⁷⁷⁸ Ibid., p41-2.

⁷⁷⁹ Ibid., p43.

⁷⁸⁰ Ibid., p44.

Panofsky had huge respect for Spitzer as a 'humanist' scholar.⁷⁸¹ The two émigrés were obviously of a like mind, and when Panofsky received a copy of Spitzer's address on *The Formation of the American Humanist*, he replied,

*"Many thanks for your wonderful speech which, I understand, was greeted with a kind of ovation when delivered, and fully deserves it. It really puts the finger on the root of the problem as far as graduate and postgraduate work is concerned. We both know, of course, that another basic trouble lies with the secondary schools."*⁷⁸²

It was this last point, noted by Morey, Krautheimer and Spitzer, that Panofsky himself believed to be the fundamental problem with the American educational set up. Over and again, throughout the forties and fifties, and on even into the nineteen-sixties, Panofsky would express his deep dissatisfaction with the American high school system. This, the émigré art historian believed, was the level at which lay the real roots of the problem concerning humanists and humanistic scholarship in America. As he related to one correspondent,

*"[T]he gravest problem of all universities in this country lies...in the entirely insufficient schooling our young men and women receive even before they enter a college – in other words, in the objectionable state of our secondary schools...Our colleges have to make up for what the secondary schools should have done, and can never hope to do this in a really efficient way because the age of easy assimilation has passed before the young people enter college."*⁷⁸³

Panofsky believed that it was within the high school, between the ages of 12 and 18, that those who were predisposed to follow the scholarly life had to be first invested with a properly 'humanistic' attitude. Accordingly, he believed that the problem of 'humanism' and 'the humanities' had to be tackled from the bottom up, as opposed to from the top down. This was an issue to which he devoted a great deal of thought and consideration. In 1945 he reiterated his primary point to one American educationalist:

*"The main problem [with the American college student] lies with the Secondary School system. It is on this 'level' (to use this horrible word) that the future college students should be exposed to a process of 'marination' which makes them 'digestible'; and this is precisely what most of our Secondary Schools fail to do."*⁷⁸⁴

⁷⁸¹ Panofsky described Spitzer as, "perhaps the greatest living scholar in the field of Romance languages and, beyond this, a man of erudition so vast and universal that he may be called the envy and despair of nearly all his colleagues." Panofsky to Harry J. Carman, January 15th, 1954 (1669).

⁷⁸² Panofsky to Leo Spitzer, April 23rd, 1951 (1452).

⁷⁸³ Panofsky to Francis A. Comstock, March 24th, 1949 (1300).

⁷⁸⁴ Panofsky to Harold Taylor, November 22nd, 1945 (1055).

In this long letter Panofsky broke down the problem as he understood it in great detail. He criticised the tendency in American education for,

“...too much electivity at an early age so that a boy or girl has practically to give up languages or history in favour of other fields (or vice versa) before he or she can reasonably know what they will need in later life.”⁷⁸⁵

And he also expressed frustration once more that the democratic ideal demanded every American student be educated and encouraged in the same way.⁷⁸⁶ Panofsky believed that there should be instead a,

“...distinction between those pupils who plan and should be allowed to go to college later on, and those who do not – and may yet be just as respectable, useful and intelligent as the others, and probably much nicer. At present, a college education seems to be required for just about everybody other than a manual labourer, which is an insult to both the manual labourer and the college. In reality, there should be a comparatively early separation between those who are intrinsically suitable for a college education and those who are not – which should by no means be a reflection upon the latter.”⁷⁸⁷

In this detailed letter Panofsky also advocated that the high school teacher should themselves be engaged with their subject. It was at the high school age, he maintained, that the young student would be most susceptible to the active example of one deeply immersed in the research of his or her subject. Panofsky lamented the fact that most American school teachers knew more about ‘education’ and ‘child psychology’, than they did about specific subject areas. Referring to this “wrong type of teaching personnel in Secondary Schools”, the émigré scholar complained,

“Nearly all these teachers, mostly women, are not actively engaged in the pursuit of either science or scholarship, poor things, but merely transmit such items of science or scholarship as they have been able to pick up before, and this in increasingly small amounts because, as we all know, a prospective high school teacher has now to devote nearly as much of her time to the alleged technique of teaching her subject as to the subject itself. Such people, with the best will in the world, will not be able, in most cases, to endow what they teach with that quality of reality which can arise only from actual intimacy with the subject, and to which boys and girls between 12 and 18 are enormously sensitive; it is this imparted sense of reality which produces that ‘marination’ mentioned before; when they have reached college age it is too late for that.”⁷⁸⁸

⁷⁸⁵ Ibid.

⁷⁸⁶ Panofsky to Max M. Warburg, September 20th, 1935 (548).

⁷⁸⁷ Panofsky to Harold Taylor, November 22nd, 1945 (1055).

⁷⁸⁸ Ibid.

Panofsky's main point of reference in his criticism of American school system was, of course, the German *Gymnasium* model that he had enjoyed and benefited from as a young adult. As he continued in this expansive letter,

*"There should be, as formerly in Europe, an interchange between (college or university teachers and secondary school teachers). Countless scholars and scientists there have started their careers as High School teachers (much to their own advantage, by the way) because they managed to do productive work along with their teaching functions; countless others preferred to continue teaching boys when, owing to their achievements, they might have changed over to a university. I myself learned my Latin from an intimate friend of Theodor Mommsen, who made a still unsurpassed edition of Cicero, and my Greek from the leading Pindar scholar of his generation. Both men wore funny beards and had never heard of juvenile psychology etc., but they did live in and for their subjects and made them real to us youngsters by this very fact."*⁷⁸⁹

Panofsky considered his own experience at the prestigious *Joachimsthalische Gymnasium* in Berlin absolutely formative in regards to his own development as a humanist scholar. He believed that the *Gymnasium* model was a prerequisite in the formation of a properly 'humanistic' attitude. This was a genuine conviction, deeply held, that Panofsky would reiterate often to friends and colleagues. As he told one former classmate, for example,

*"If I have met with some measure of success, it is, and I am quite honest in saying so, very largely due to the good old Joachimsthal, where we did learn a fair amount of Greek and Latin. One of our former schoolmates...now a Gymnasialprofessor at Zittau in the Russian zone (and having seen rather hard times, as you can imagine) wrote me that he probably would have given up long ago if he had not remembered the famous lines from Horace: 'Si fractus illabatur orbis / Impavidum ferient ruinae'. This deeply touched me and should prove to all skeptics the real value of a humanistic education."*⁷⁹⁰

Considerable experience working with an American studentship convinced Panofsky that the real problem of 'humanism' and 'the humanities' in the United States lay in the entirely inadequate development, or *cultivation* of 'humanists'. This was not something that should or could be rectified at a university level. Thus, Panofsky believed, the real solution would only be found in the development of secondary schools in America along the lines of the *Gymnasium* model.

⁷⁸⁹ Ibid.

⁷⁹⁰ Panofsky to Wilhelm Rieck, June 16th, 1955 (1819). (The Latin lines read: *Should the whole frame of Nature round him break, / In ruin and confusion hurled, / He, unconcerned, would hear the mighty crack, / And stand secure amidst a falling world.* Horace Ode iii, Book iii, translated by Joseph Addison) For the importance of his *Gymnasium* experience, see also, Panofsky to Bruno Snell, June 10th, 1955 (1815), & Panofsky to Stefan Hirsch, June 6th, 1956 (1957).

In 1950 Panofsky was approached by the John Hay Whitney Foundation and asked to provide “a memorandum on those problems on the humanities...which have been in operation long enough to warrant evaluation.”⁷⁹¹ The philanthropist ‘Jock’ Whitney had set up the Foundation the previous year, with a \$1,000,000 gift, in order to address his “conviction that education was creatively interested in science and inadequately concerned with humanistic values.”⁷⁹² Whitney believed that “the tremendous increase in scientific and technological changes had...rendered humanistic values questionable and obscure”⁷⁹³ and he intended to use his money to impact positively upon learning in the arts and humanities. Panofsky was thus one of a group of noted scholars invited “to discuss ways of encouraging education in the humanities at a time when great energy, large sums of money, and strong convictions were shaping intense study and research in science to a degree never known before.”⁷⁹⁴ Panofsky was informed that the Trustees of the Foundation were “interested in exploring the field of the humanities as a phase of education which, if strengthened at the college and university level, might yield important values for our present-day changing society.”⁷⁹⁵

Panofsky had known ‘Jock’ Whitney personally since the early 1930s,⁷⁹⁶ and he obviously believed that the solicitation from this wealthy Foundation provided the opportunity to address his own concerns. He gave his response a great deal of thought. He took the original letter from the Foundation, and the lengthy supplementary notes, with him on vacation to Maine. The length and detail of Panofsky’s reply, sent six days later, indicates just how important he felt these issues to be.⁷⁹⁷

Panofsky began his response by defining and clarifying his terms:

“While the humanities are a group of disciplines which can be defined in terms of subject matter, humanism is an attitude which can be described only in terms of individual characteristics. It is possible to treat a discipline that falls under the heading of the humanities in utterly non-humanistic fashion while many scientists – and, in my experience, just the best of them – can well be deeply imbued with what I call the humanistic attitude. Robert Bunsen used to say that the most valuable feature of his pre-academic education was not the study of chemistry (outright misleading at his time) but the study of the Latin classics which had taught him to

⁷⁹¹ Charles S. Johnson to Panofsky, July 17th, 1950 (1378).

⁷⁹² D. Powell, *John Hay Whitney Foundation: A Report of the First Twenty-five Years*, Vol. II, 1972, p1.

⁷⁹³ *Ibid.*, p3.

⁷⁹⁴ E. Rauschenbush, *John Hay Whitney Foundation: A Report of the First Twenty-five Years*, Vol. I, 1972, p xvii.

⁷⁹⁵ Charles S. Johnson to Panofsky, July 17th, 1950 (1378).

⁷⁹⁶ Whitney was Chairman of MOMA’s Film Library, while Panofsky was on the Advisory Committee. The two men maintained a correspondence well into the 1950s. See, for example, J.H. Whitney to Panofsky, July 13th, 1953 (AAA).

⁷⁹⁷ There are multiple copies of this letter in the John Hay Whitney file at the AAA. The corrections and amendments made indicate just how considered and ‘composed’ was Panofsky’s response.

*think clearly and to develop a sense of proportion. And one of my best friends, a Nobel Prize winner in theoretical physics, is so profoundly convinced that modern physics, as he phrases it, 'no longer gives us a complete picture of the world' that he felt moved to look back upon Kepler and make a truly brilliant study of the latter's quarrel with Robert Fludd in the preparation of which I had the privilege of giving him some philological assistance."*⁷⁹⁸

"As an attitude", Panofsky continued,

*"humanism can be 'taught' only by permitting the individual, student as well as teacher, to develop what may be called the habit of self-responsibility and, at the same time, to acquire the sense of feeling 'at home' with the intellectual foundations of our culture. It is a process, not so much of 'training' as, if I may use a homely simile, of marination – a process of maturing under control yet without regimentation."*⁷⁹⁹

Panofsky then confronted what he believed to be the real roots of the problem in America:

*"It has been my experience with students...that this process of maturing should begin at a very early age, and that our secondary schools are, by and large, not very well equipped to initiate and promote it. The teaching staff largely consists of persons who – for many reasons, among them the unfortunate over-emphasis on 'educational' training – are not actively interested in their subjects and, therefore, cannot practise what I consider the only effective method of instruction, viz., by example. The pupils, on the other hand, are forced to make a choice between various types of curricula at an age when they cannot possibly foresee what they will really need in later life – need, that is, not in the sense of practical usefulness but of their own development into human beings aware of themselves and their cultural situation."*⁸⁰⁰

In lieu of these concerns Panofsky proposed to the John Hay Whitney Foundation that:

"It might, therefore, well be worthwhile to establish a type of secondary school, as an experiment, which would have the following distinctive features: (a) Its teaching staff would be composed of scholars and scientists actively interested in their respective fields...and capable of making their pupils aware of the human values inherent in these subjects – linguists who know the history of the language they teach, historians who have a sense of language, literature and even art, mathematicians and physicists who have a feeling for the value of mathematics and physics independent of their applicability to practical tasks. (b) Since our civilization is rooted in Graeco-Roman and Judaeo-Christian antiquity, the curriculum of this school should comprise five or six years of Greek and eight or nine years of Latin...along with mathematics, the natural sciences, history and one modern

⁷⁹⁸ Panofsky to the John Hay Whitney Foundation, July 23rd, 1950 (1381).

⁷⁹⁹ Ibid.

⁸⁰⁰ Ibid.

language, and should be uniformly compulsory for all students up to their final examinations...No mathematician or scientist has ever regretted to have read Virgil and Philostratus if he has ever done so under the guidance of a true philologist; no humanist has ever regretted to have studied mathematics up to spherical trigonometry if he has done so under the guidance of a real mathematician.”⁸⁰¹

Panofsky acknowledged in his letter that “the establishment of such a ‘John Hay Whitney’ High School”, would be a difficult prospect in America.⁸⁰² He recognised that scholars would have to be offered “huge inducements” to leave their posts at a university or college to teach there; and that progression agreements with reputable and respected institutions of higher learning would also have to be endorsed in order for any parent to allow their child to subscribe to such a rigorous and ‘experimental’ programme of education. Nevertheless, Panofsky’s proposed *Gymnasium*-model high school was a serious recommendation, offered as a solution to what he considered to be a serious problem:

“I have brought up the question of secondary education mainly in order to bring home the point that the problem of humanism – and even the humanities – is to develop humanists; that, ideally, this development should start at the bottom instead of at the top; and that it takes, above all other things, time.”⁸⁰³

Recognising that his proposal was rather “fanciful”, Panofsky also suggested to the Whitney Foundation a more immediately practicable way to aid what Leo Spitzer had termed *The Formation of the American Humanist*. Panofsky pointed out that the young American academic, upon gaining their doctorate would, with very few exceptions, accept a post as an instructor or assistant professor in a college or university. They were then, almost immediately, overburdened with excessive teaching duties that seriously hampered their ability to do productive research work. This meant they were denied that “balance between research work and teaching”⁸⁰⁴ that Panofsky considered so mutually beneficial, for both the student and the developing scholar.⁸⁰⁵ This important balance, Panofsky claimed, was denied “in ninety of a hundred cases” in America. He believed that the extreme teaching load carried by the young American academic,

“...not only impedes his individual development but also deprives his teaching of that vitality which comes only with the joy of communicating the results of fresh endeavour. Even more important, the impossibility to continue his private research

⁸⁰¹ Ibid.

⁸⁰² Ibid.

⁸⁰³ Ibid.

⁸⁰⁴ Ibid.

⁸⁰⁵ Panofsky to Henri M. Peyre, December 7th, 1955 (1881).

prevents the young scholar from acquiring the habit of functioning both as a researcher and a teacher."⁸⁰⁶

Existing research 'Fellowships', awarded by organisations such as the Guggenheim Foundation, and even those temporary 'Memberships' granted at Panofsky's own Institute for Advanced Study, took the recipients out of teaching altogether, and thus addressed only a part of the problem as Panofsky understood it. They did not fully encourage and facilitate for the developing scholar, that "priceless experience of combing and equilibrating teaching and research."⁸⁰⁷ As such, Panofsky suggested that,

*"The John Hay Whitney Foundation could go a long way to promote the cause of true humanism by establishing...fellowships which would enable promising young scholars to accept instructorships or assistant professorships on a half-time basis and thus to continue their constructive research work while not forsaking their teaching activities...[Young academics] and their students would be better served by teachers who bring to their job the freshness and confidence engendered by constructive research work; and they would help to develop scholars who in their critical years have had a chance of achieving the all-important balance between private research and social function, discovery and communication."*⁸⁰⁸

Panofsky's thorough and detailed reply to the Whitney Foundation met with a positive response. Charles S. Johnson, senior advisor to the Foundation, informed the émigré scholar that,

*"...your very challenging letter in reply to my own regarding the memorandum on the humanities when shown to Mr Whitney found him greatly interested. He asked that other members of the Board of Trustees of the Foundation be sent a copy of it for their information."*⁸⁰⁹

Panofsky was then invited to the Foundation's 'Humanities Seminar' to discuss further the problems outlined in his letter.⁸¹⁰ He was also made a Member of the Foundation's *Humanities Project Advisory Board*.⁸¹¹ Panofsky's concerns were echoed among the other scholars invited to contribute to the Foundation's 'Humanities Seminar'.⁸¹² It was generally agreed upon, for example, that the place of the humanities within the curricula of the American high school should be a major focus for the Whitney Foundation. Accordingly, the 'John Hay Fellows Program' was established in 1952; a

⁸⁰⁶ Ibid.

⁸⁰⁷ Ibid.

⁸⁰⁸ Ibid.

⁸⁰⁹ Charles S. Johnson to Panofsky, September 8th, 1950 (AAA).

⁸¹⁰ Charles S. Johnson to Panofsky, November 24th, 1950 (AAA).

⁸¹¹ See, Panofsky to Harry J. Carman, December 19th, 1951 (AAA), & Harry J. Carman to Panofsky, January 23rd, 1952 (AAA).

⁸¹² For details of this Seminar, and the contributions of others involved, see Powell, *John Hay Whitney Foundation*, op. cit., pp1-6.

programme that saw up to twenty public high school teachers (in the fields of literature and language, social studies, history and the arts) selected annually, and provided with the opportunity and the resources to study for a year at the universities of Columbia and Yale.⁸¹³ There was also established a 'Visiting Professors Program', an initiative that sought to utilise the talents and experience of eminent humanist scholars at the point of retirement, by funding their placement in smaller colleges and universities where they could then lead by example. The ultimate aim of this enterprise was to "enrich and deepen the humanities for undergraduate students by giving them a unique opportunity to study with men and women who represented the best in humanistic education, (and) who had spent long years in university teaching to that end."⁸¹⁴ Panofsky was particularly enthused by this "ageing scholars program" because he believed it could benefit those émigré professors who, having arrived in America at an advanced age, had been unable to accrue a decent pension.⁸¹⁵

Panofsky recognised that the Whitney Foundation was capable of making prompt and resolute decisions, backed up by considerable expenditure.⁸¹⁶ And he was encouraged, initially, by the actions of the Foundation; nominating several émigrés as 'Visiting Professors' (Leo Spitzer among them).⁸¹⁷ However, Panofsky also harboured reservations as to the ultimate effectiveness of the Foundation's chosen undertakings.⁸¹⁸ Though he remained in contact with the organisation into the 1960s Panofsky became disillusioned with the scope and impact of the Foundation's initiatives. He had received a favourable response to his initial input, but as time wore on Panofsky felt that his real concerns had not been addressed, and he felt he had had little impact. When Panofsky was approached by one scholar who had seen his name on the Foundation's letterhead, he replied, for example,

*"I must confess that I am not really in the councils of the great. They have included my name by way of courtesy because they had asked for my advice before the whole thing was set up; but since it began I have hardly ever heard from them."*⁸¹⁹

When Panofsky was then asked to travel to New York to participate in one of the Foundation's discussion groups, on André Malraux's *The Voices of Silence*, he replied with some curtness, "I must confess that I have not read Malraux's *Voices of Silence* and, frankly speaking, do not plan to do so in

⁸¹³ Ibid., pp7-24.

⁸¹⁴ Raushenbush, *John Hay Whitney Foundation*, op. cit., p156.

⁸¹⁵ Panofsky to Harry J. Carman, January 12th, 1953 (1571).

⁸¹⁶ In each of its first three years the John Hay Fellows Program worked with a grant of \$200,000. Powell, *John Hay Whitney Foundation*, op. cit., p7.

⁸¹⁷ See Panofsky to Harry J. Carman, January 12th, 1953 (1571), & January 15th, 1954 (1669).

⁸¹⁸ Panofsky to Harry J. Carman, December 19th, 1951 (AAA).

⁸¹⁹ Panofsky to Paul Friedländer, July 7th, 1952 (AAA).

view of the shortness of life.”⁸²⁰ By the time Panofsky was sent the programme for the John Hay Whitney ‘Summer Institute in the Humanities for Public High School Teachers and Public School Administrators’ in 1959, he had become thoroughly dissatisfied with the impact of the Foundation’s Humanities project.⁸²¹ Though he described this Summer School idea as “a very promising undertaking”, Panofsky deemed any possible benefits so far removed from those of the proposals he had originally submitted that he felt compelled to inform the Director of the John Hay Fellows Program,

“[I]t is obvious that undertakings like these...do not really go to the heart of the matter. I hope you will not think me presumptuous in reminding you of a brief report which I sent to Mr Whitney before his Foundation was established and in which I pointed out the desirability of establishing at least one really good secondary school that might serve as a beacon...and thus help raise the standards all the way round...I wonder whether the time may have come that this beautiful dream may be realized, even on a modest scale, so as to reintroduce to the American scene a type of school where pupils are considered as people seeking instruction rather than ways of living, and where teachers are supposed to know their subjects rather than alleged methods of communication.”⁸²²

Panofsky’s idea of establishing a model secondary school according the German *Gymnasium* model had developed after nigh on twenty years’ experience as a teacher and Professor in America. It was conceived of as a result of his considered reflection on the alterity of the academic and intellectual environment he had encountered in the United States. Even into the 1960s Panofsky remained convinced that this proposal offered a possible solution to a very real and significant problem. At a conference on the humanities at Brown University for example, Panofsky once more gave mention to,

...a plan which I have cherished over many years but could never sell to anybody – to try a new type of secondary school that would have curricula and teachers somewhat resembling those of the European...Gymnasium. They would mercilessly flunk out those pupils who cannot keep up with these curricula and keep the others going in history and languages and mathematics and physics (it isn’t too much, no one has died of it) until they leave at the age of eighteen; and arrangements would be made to the effect that the final examination of such a school would, ipso facto, assure the student’s acceptance by a number of respectable colleges.⁸²³

⁸²⁰ Panofsky to S. Palmer Bovis, April 19th, 1954 (AAA).

⁸²¹ Charles R. Keller to Panofsky, January 28th, 1959 (AAA).

⁸²² Panofsky to Charles R. Keller, February 4th, 1959 (2307).

⁸²³ For Panofsky’s contribution to this conference, see *Man’s Contracting World in an Expanding Universe: Proceedings of the Brown University Convocation held in Providence, Rhode Island, October 21, 22, and 23, 1959*, Ben H. Bagdikian ed., 1960, pp122-8; p127.

As an émigré however, Panofsky remained very much aware that his proposal was somewhat visionary in America. Compelled to defend his ideas for the *Gymnasium*-type school he wrote to one American correspondent,

“Far be it from me to look down upon anyone who does not happen to be an ‘intellectual’ (on the contrary, I have the greatest admiration for a good plumber, a good radio mechanic and, above all, a good stockbroker, who seems to me to be the nearest equivalent to the medieval mystic), and a world consisting exclusively of scholars would be even more terrible to behold than a world consisting exclusively of plumbers, radio mechanics and stockbrokers. What...I believe to be true is that those few people who – for reasons known only to God and themselves – want to become scholars should be given a chance, which they simply are not given under our present system or at least not in sufficient numbers. What I...wish for is not so much a change in the general picture of secondary education as a re-establishment of standards in a limited number of secondary schools that used to exist but were, as it were, crowded out by the acceptance of Deweyism everywhere; in other words, I am not so much for changing the rules as for increasing the number of exceptions.”⁸²⁴



6. Panofsky in the 1940s.

It is significant in this regard, I think, that Panofsky seems to have founded this idea of a ‘model’ school, on the work and the success of his former boss at the IAS, Abraham Flexner. As Panofsky pointed out to one correspondent, in the early decades of the twentieth century,

“Dr Abraham Flexner mobilized the great resources of the Rockefeller Foundation in order to found a limited number of medical colleges so high in quality and so exacting in requirements that their very existence forced the inferior institutions to compete or to shut down. In a similar way, I have always believed that a reform of our secondary school system could be improved only if one of the large foundations would be prepared to invest a considerable sum of money, not in surveys but in the establishment of a large number of high schools which are...sufficiently endowed with money and prestige to attract teaching faculties of the same calibre as those of

⁸²⁴ Panofsky to H.D. Sheldon, December 1st, 1955 (1877).

a good college or university, and students prepared to submit to a program of study which our progressive educators would consider exorbitant as well as unprofitable. Teachers of this kind will never be produced by Teacher's Colleges but only by first rate universities. While I admit that excellent scholars or scientists may well be unable to teach, I do not admit that really good teachers, even on a high school level, can operate without being good scholars or scientists. In short, in order to bring about a real rather than apparent improvement we shall have to abandon Dewey and revert to Erasmus and Galileo."⁸²⁵

The proposal of a separate educational pathway, the aim of which, at least in part, was to cultivate and develop a scholarly 'elite', was largely foreign and almost diametrically opposed to the 'democratic' ideals and traditions of American education and American society. This put Panofsky in a delicate position as an émigré. To use Flexner as a model was to demonstrate that there was an American precedent for such an idea. Other émigré scholars who had similar criticisms of the American environment also acknowledged the fundamental alterity, and 'foreignness' of their ideas. Leo Spitzer, for example, when writing about "integrating the interests of a scholarly elite into those of our democracy", commented, "A scholarly elite in a democracy? Some American thinkers seem to think this to be impossible."⁸²⁶ Spitzer then provided the example of the supposedly 'liberal' historian Henry Commager, who had written in the popular *Life* magazine,

When the critical pedant of the Old World disparages American academic traditions, we are prone – and with much reason – to answer tartly: it has never been the Americans who succumbed to the evil and meretricious appeals of Fascism, Nazism, or Communism.⁸²⁷

Against this background it is understandable why Panofsky, in the early 1950s at least, kept his criticisms of American education largely contained to his own private correspondence. The suggestions to the Whitney Foundation in 1950, only a few months before Commager's article was printed, were made in response to a request from a private organisation; an organisation funded by an individual known personally to Panofsky. But even after nigh on twenty years living and working in the United States, Panofsky remained extremely reticent in regards to presenting his criticisms of the American environment on a public platform. When asked by the American Philological Association to provide an address on 'The Problems of Scholarship in the Humanities' in 1951,

⁸²⁵ Panofsky to the members of Temple University's *Experimental Program in Teacher Education*, June 16th, 1959 (2367). It is interesting too, that Flexner had proposed a new type of secondary education in America as early as 1916 – pointing to the German *Gymnasium* school, and how "the Germans seem to succeed where we fail." A. Flexner, "A Modern School," *American Review of Reviews*, 53, 1916, pp465–474; p465

⁸²⁶ L. Spitzer, *The Formation of the American Humanist*, op. cit., p47-8.

⁸²⁷ Henry S. Commager *Editorial*, 'Our Schools Have Kept us Free', *Life*, October 16th, 1950, pp46-7; p46. Quoted in Spitzer, p48.

Panofsky declined, informing his correspondent from this august American body (who also happened to be a personal friend),

“What I might have to say about the present state of humanistic studies would be both trivial and offensive. This state, like everything else in history, is due to developments too fundamental to be influenced by criticism or wishful proposals. And, speaking quite concretely, a change for the better could be effected only by measures which have, for the time being, not the slightest chance of realisation. The basic trouble, I think, lies with the present principles of secondary education which, in turn, have untold repercussions on the present system of undergraduate and even graduate teaching. To solve the problem...it would be necessary to establish a sizeable number of high schools in which the subjects are taught by people knowing and loving these subjects and in which the pupils would not be confronted with a choice between a ‘humanistic’ and a ‘non-humanistic’ curriculum at an age at which they are incapable of rationally making such a choice. And such a reform (in reality an undoing of the reforms enforced during the twentieth century) would presuppose, in addition to unobtainable sums of money, the dynamiting of all teachers’ colleges, the abolition of all departments of education, and the poisoning of a very large number of psychologists, social scientists, and psychoanalysts. A modest proposal to this effect, if made in a public address, might seem self-evident to some, but uncharitable to others. It is a statement which I can make in a personal letter to a colleague and friend, but should hesitate to make on a public platform.”⁸²⁸

Despite the success and acclaim Panofsky had enjoyed in America, he remained wary still, at the beginning of the nineteen-fifties, of appearing too ‘conspicuous’.

‘Cold War on the Campus’⁸²⁹

Following the end of the Second World War, the new reality of the nuclear age and the threats to both individual and academic freedom engendered by the Cold War gave many American academics pause for thought. These developments were hugely prominent in Panofsky’s mind and he referred to them regularly, and in some detail, in his letters. Wolfgang Panofsky was heavily involved in the American government’s nuclear development programme during the War,⁸³⁰ and his father would often write to him concerning ‘atomic matters’. Panofsky senior expressed himself glad that the development of the A-bomb had ended the war, “that the Germans did not get there first, and

⁸²⁸ Panofsky to Lily Ross Taylor, November 5th, 1951 (1491).

⁸²⁹ This apposite title is taken from the book by Jane Sanders, *Cold War on the Campus: Academic Freedom at the University of Washington, 1946-64*, 1979.

⁸³⁰ Wolfgang became a project director for the National Defense Research Committee and was involved in the early nuclear tests at Pasadena. He went on to design the shockwave calibrators that were used to measure the yields of the bombs at Hiroshima and Nagasaki. J.D. Jackson, ‘Panofsky Agonistes: The 1950 Loyalty Oath at Berkeley’, *Physics Today*, 62:1, January 2009, pp41-47.

that...the Jews played quite a role in getting the job done.”⁸³¹ However, he harboured grave reservations about the devastating potential of this new appliance of science. As he informed Wolfgang little over a week later, “Less gratifying are the consequences of your successful trespassing on the preserves of God.”⁸³²

It is evident from Panofsky’s letters that he very quickly grasped the implications of the A-bomb for world politics, and the potential for a nuclear ‘Cold War’. He recognised that the most immediately pressing issue for the American government and military was whether or not to exploit the new nuclear capability in order to consolidate and bolster national interests, particularly in response to the perceived threat of Communist Russia, and he soon acknowledged that there was “a tendency to polarize the whole discussion (regarding nuclear technology) in the direction of USA vs Russia.”⁸³³ Only a few weeks after Nagasaki, he informed Wolfgang,

*“There are those who now say, ‘Thank God for the bomb, let’s keep it a secret and tell the Russians where to get off’ – as though any first-rate invention had ever been kept ‘secret’; and as though the Russians, in peace-time were not fully capable of commandeering sufficient resources and manpower to duplicate our plants within a few years.”*⁸³⁴

Keen to keep abreast of scientific and political developments, Panofsky was well informed on the issues surrounding new advancements in nuclear technology and weaponry. When he heard that his friend Booth Tarkington was to provide a radio address entitled ‘Fools Will Burn’, Panofsky relayed the information he had gleaned from his son Wolfgang and from his scientist colleagues in Princeton.⁸³⁵

*“The consensus seems to be that it would take the Russians about three years ...and smaller nations such as the French five or six; whereby there is a definite possibility that these hypothetical foreign teams, if they were to work independently of our ‘secret methods’, might hit on something much more devastating than our own bomb which, for the time being, exploits only 1/1000 of the energy theoretically available...[T]his is one more reason for stabilizing the bomb as is on an international level rather than embarking upon an atomic armament race with the world at large.”*⁸³⁶

Panofsky also expressed his fear that,

⁸³¹ Panofsky to Wolfgang Panofsky, August 8th, 1945 (1025).

⁸³² Panofsky to Wolfgang Panofsky, August 20th, 1945 (1028).

⁸³³ Panofsky to Booth Tarkington, October 3rd, 1945 (1041).

⁸³⁴ Panofsky to Wolfgang Panofsky, August 28th, 1945 (1029).

⁸³⁵ See, *Dr Panofsky and Mr Tarkington*, op. cit., p118-120. Panofsky boasted to Saxl around this time that he was “a little involved (indirectly) in propoganda concerning the atomic bomb.” November 19th, 1945 (1052).

⁸³⁶ Panofsky to Tarkington, September 20th, 1945 (1035).

*"...some quarters would like to precipitate a 'showdown' with Russia before those hypothetical 'three years' are over and we have lost our temporary monopoly on the atomic bomb."*⁸³⁷

Following Hiroshima and Nagasaki, cognizance of the possible repercussions of any nuclear conflict cast a pervasive and ominous shadow over many aspects of American life. For Panofsky, as for many others, the dawn of the nuclear age brought with it a real sense of anxiety and trepidation. As he wrote to Wolfgang in October 1945,

*"The world at large...is certainly doom-shaped, as we used to say...It seems that we are now trying to precipitate a war with Russia as long as we have the bomb and they don't(?), which would at least be logical though, of course, disastrous in the long run. But there is nothing we can do except work and have a moderately good time prior to being atomised and strongly ionised."*⁸³⁸

In the October of 1945 Panofsky related to Tarkington how Dora complained that their correspondence had become "too atomic lately", admitting, "I am afraid [she is] right; but I find it hard to keep my mind off these problems."⁸³⁹ Such 'atomic' anxieties remained manifest in Panofsky's correspondence throughout the forties and fifties and on into the nineteen-sixties.

As can be surmised from the letters quoted above, Panofsky quickly developed what could be called a 'humanistic' perspective in regards to the best way to confront the new nuclear reality. He was certainly very much against the exploitation of the bomb for any nationalist gain. As he told Harry Bober,

*"The thing should be internationalised right away instead of being used to threaten Uncle Joe. No major invention has ever remained a secret for more than two or three years...So we have really no choice other than to keep the peace...or to wind up as a nova."*⁸⁴⁰

Panofsky's attitude was here marked by a certain pragmatism, but he genuinely believed that,

*"...far from being kept a 'secret'...[the bomb] should be internationalised right away...[T]he only adequate countermeasure is Peace; and...far from 'mustering all our courage' to face the atomic age, we must muster all our cowardice."*⁸⁴¹

Panofsky believed the advent of the nuclear age actually provided an opportunity for a new era of international cooperation. He was of the opinion that the major world powers now had a chance,

⁸³⁷ Ibid.

⁸³⁸ Panofsky to Wolfgang Panofsky, October 15th, 1945 (1044).

⁸³⁹ Panofsky to Tarkington, October 14th, 1945 (1043).

⁸⁴⁰ Panofsky to Harry Bober, September 18th, 1945 (1033).

⁸⁴¹ Panofsky to Mildred and Bob Burrage, September 14th, 1945 (1031).

and a reason, to liaise and communicate on a hitherto unprecedented scale. Indeed, for Panofsky, any alternative course of action seemed to defy reason. Although he stopped short of Albert Einstein's claim that the only real chance of survival for mankind would be World Government at once,⁸⁴² Panofsky did write to his Republican friend Tarkington,

*"May God enlighten the Republican Party...to conduct their next campaign, not under such slogans as 'Pearl Harbor' or 'Bungling in Washington' but under the slogan: 'Friendship with Russia or Vaporisation,' and to present a candidate who can be trusted with sticking to that!"*⁸⁴³

Panofsky was encouraged that many scientists, 'the good ones' at least, seemed to share his own 'humanistic' viewpoint. As he wrote to Fritz Saxl, "The only humanists left are the physicists, and one should try to help them along."⁸⁴⁴ Some of the most prominent scientists in America had been enlisted during the war in the effort to develop nuclear weaponry. After 1945 the American military-industrial complex only stepped up its efforts to exploit and advance such 'scientific' developments in the national interest. As Wolfgang, who had an intimate knowledge of such developments, informed his father,

*"Evidently against the completely unanimous opinion of all scientific people that any attempt at secrecy is not only useless but will injure our relations with Russia and France and will make the United Nations Organization ridiculous, [President] Truman has decided to let us believe in our industrial superiority and hold the 'secret' to ourselves. This only means, at least now, that the Army and Navy will continue collecting bombs."*⁸⁴⁵

As Wolfgang's letter indicates, many scientists provided an alternative view to the official policy emanating from Washington. Those involved with the development of the bomb recognised that, in time, the technology would certainly be replicated in other countries. Thus, as the American military-industrial complex seemed intent upon slaloming towards an all-out arms race with Soviet Russia, many scientists proffered an alternative, 'humanistic' voice of conscience. Impressed by public statements to this effect Panofsky noted, "On the whole, the scientists have done pretty well in setting up an audible howl."⁸⁴⁶

⁸⁴² Panofsky did quote Einstein's proposal for "World Government at once" to Booth Tarkington, October 3rd, 1945 (1041).

⁸⁴³ Panofsky to Tarkington, December 5th, 1945.

⁸⁴⁴ Panofsky to Saxl, November 19th, 1945 (1052).

⁸⁴⁵ Wolfgang Panofsky to Panofsky, undated letter, from October 1945 (1043B).

⁸⁴⁶ Panofsky to Booth Tarkington, October 31st, 1945 (1045). For such public statements from scientists see, for example, 'War Ban is Urgent, 515 Scientists Say', *New York Times*, Wednesday, October 31st, 1945, p6.

Panofsky was particularly impressed by J. Robert Oppenheimer. A physicist of international repute, Oppenheimer was the leading figure in the development of the atomic bomb at Los Alamos, and his influence continued after 1945 when he was appointed Chairman of the General Advisory Committee of the influential Atomic Energy Commission.⁸⁴⁷ After the war however, Oppenheimer used his public prominence to sound a note of caution, and to speak of the need for openness, tolerance and restraint – an attitude that saw him increasingly at odds with the official Government stance. In a public lecture tour in 1945 and 1946, Oppenheimer called repeatedly for the internationalisation of knowledge in regards atomic weaponry, and in recognition of the potential for Cold War, he advocated open communication between nations. Panofsky heard Oppenheimer speak in Philadelphia at a meeting of the American Philosophical Society and the National Academy of Sciences, and he was hugely impressed. Oppenheimer began his speech on this occasion by informing his audience,

We have made a thing, a most terrible weapon, that has altered abruptly and profoundly the nature of the world...(W)e have raised again the question of whether science is good for man, of whether it is good to learn about the world, to try to understand it, to try to control it, to help give to the world of men increased insight, increased power.⁸⁴⁸

In answer to these self-reflective doubts, Oppenheimer gave firm expression to that enlightenment belief in the ameliorative power of knowledge and learning:

Because we are scientists, we must say an unalterable yes to these questions: it is our faith and our commitment, seldom made explicit, even more seldom challenged, that knowledge is a good in itself, knowledge and such power as must come with it.⁸⁴⁹

To bolster this belief, in the face of the new and undeniably destructive powers unleashed by science, Oppenheimer made an appeal to history. He pointed out that ‘science’ had consistently thrown up new challenges and new anxieties for mankind. However, history also demonstrated that man had always proved capable of adapting to the new ‘realities’ engendered by scientific discovery:

One will perhaps think back to the early days of physical science in western culture when it was felt so deep a threat to the whole Christian world. One will remember the more recent times of the last century where such a threat was seen by some in

⁸⁴⁷ After the War Oppenheimer was also a member of the Department of Defense’s Research and Development Board and the Air Force’s Science Advisory Committee.

⁸⁴⁸ Oppenheimer’s speech on this occasion was published as ‘Atomic Weapons’, in *Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society*, 90:1, *Symposium on Atomic Energy and Its Implications*, January 1946, pp7-10; p7.

⁸⁴⁹ *Ibid.*

the new understanding of the relations between man and the rest of the living world. One may even remember the concern among the learned at some of the developments of physics, the theory of relativity, even more the ideas of complementarity, and their far-reaching implications on the relations of common sense and of scientific discovery...[O]ften before [science] has injected into the world elements of instability and change...If there is a peril in the situation today, as I believe, we may look to the past for reassurance that our faith in the value of knowledge can prevail.⁸⁵⁰

Notwithstanding this appeal to history, Oppenheimer was adamant that man's new atomic capability offered a unique and genuine danger to humanity. He pointed out that nuclear arms were relatively cheap to make, and he was unflinching in his depiction of the catastrophe that would occur were competing nations to resort to nuclear war. It was the scientist, Oppenheimer pointed out, who best understood how destructive the technology could be; and it was the scientist, therefore, who had a responsibility to alert people to the implications of the new technological developments, and to inform and advise accordingly:

I think it will not help to avert such a war if we try to rub the edges off this new terror that we have helped bring to the world. I think it is for us among all men, for us as scientists...to accept as fact this new terror, and to accept with it the necessity for those transformations in the world which will make it possible to integrate these developments into human life. I think we cannot in the long term protect science against this threat to its spirit and this reproach to its issue unless we recognise the threat and the reproach and help our fellow men in every way suitable to remove their cause. Their cause is war.⁸⁵¹

For Oppenheimer the only adequate response to the new reality of the nuclear age, the only way to assure mankind's development and progression, was to bring about world peace. In accord with Panofsky's own views, this prominent physicist suggested that the development of nuclear arms offered not only a challenge, but an opportunity.⁸⁵² For Oppenheimer, the very real possibility of a catastrophic nuclear war offered the hope, indeed the necessity, of at last acknowledging,

...our common bond with all peoples everywhere, our common responsibility for a world without war, our common confidence that in a world thus united the things that we cherish – learning and freedom and humanity – will not be lost.⁸⁵³

And it was precisely in the field of science and scholarship, Oppenheimer pointed out, that such a model of international cooperation, exchange and accord could be initiated.⁸⁵⁴

⁸⁵⁰ Ibid., p7-8.

⁸⁵¹ Ibid.

⁸⁵² Ibid., p9.

⁸⁵³ Ibid.

Acknowledging the idealistic tenor of his speech Oppenheimer made a final appeal to his audience's more 'reasonable' and pragmatic side:

These words might seem visionary, but they are not meant as so. It is a practical thing to avert an atomic war. It is a practical thing to recognise the fraternity of the peoples of the world. It is a practical thing to recognise as a common responsibility...the completely uncommon peril that atomic weapons constitute for the world, to recognise that only by a community of responsibility is there any hope of meeting the peril.⁸⁵⁵

What would instead be "visionary", Oppenheimer suggested, would be to continue down the well-worn path of non-cooperation and international conflict.⁸⁵⁶

Oppenheimer's speech had a huge impact on Panofsky. Not long after the Philadelphia conference he informed one correspondent,

*"Oppenheimer, whom I had not met before but who greeted me very kindly in my capacity of 'father of two useful sons', gave one of the best talks I ever heard, coming down like a ton of bricks upon the 'statesmen' who had tried to claim him for their policy of the 'big stick,' stating, and he should know, that atomic bombs would be not only available to all nations before long and, in addition, very cheap; that there was no imaginable defense; and that...the only safeguard was peace."*⁸⁵⁷

For Panofsky, Oppenheimer stood as a fine example of a scholar in the public eye who had something to say in regards to the fundamental issues facing mankind, and who could do so with clarity and eloquence. Panofsky was also particularly impressed with Oppenheimer as an individual, reporting to Tarkington a couple of weeks later, "Oppenheimer is a very fine, cultured man, enormously rich, interested in horses, Impressionists and medieval French."⁸⁵⁸ Oppenheimer's appeal to history in the name of 'pure' science also resonated strongly with Panofsky. Ultimately, this prominent, public figure had given voice to those cosmopolitan, 'humanistic' ideals that Panofsky himself held so dear. In opposition to any narrowly nationalist perspective, Oppenheimer advocated responsibility and tolerance – the two postulates Panofsky suggested resulted from a properly 'humanistic' attitude.⁸⁵⁹ For Panofsky, Oppenheimer was an impressive example of an individual scholar, a scientist and a 'humanist' who 'thought about what he was doing'.

⁸⁵⁴ Ibid., p10.

⁸⁵⁵ Ibid., p9.

⁸⁵⁶ Ibid., p10.

⁸⁵⁷ Panofsky to Bob Burrage, November 22nd, 1945 (1054).

⁸⁵⁸ Panofsky to Tarkington, December 5th, 1945 (1058).

⁸⁵⁹ *The History of Art as a Humanistic Discipline*, op. cit., p92.

A few months after meeting Oppenheimer for the first time in Philadelphia, Panofsky was part of a three-man Faculty Committee at the IAS, charged with creating a list of candidates to replace the out-going Director Frank Aydelotte.⁸⁶⁰ Oppenheimer's name was placed firmly at the head of this list, and he was officially offered the post in the autumn of 1946. Oppenheimer had not long resigned his position at Los Alamos and he accepted the Directorship of the Institute, taking up official residence in Princeton the next year. Panofsky was delighted when Oppenheimer became his new 'Chief', and the two men enjoyed a close friendship and mutual respect thereafter. For Panofsky, Oppenheimer was the perfect man to direct the Institute's activities in both the sciences and the humanities.⁸⁶¹

In light of world-political events, and their impact upon the psyche of the American public, the 'humanistic' perspective shared by Panofsky and Oppenheimer soon became a minority view. With the Communist coup in Czechoslovakia in February 1948, the Berlin Blockade by Soviets in June 1948-9, and the establishment of the People's Republic of China in October 1949, international Communism became for many Americans a menacing spectre. Widely regarded as a political philosophy entirely inimical and opposed to the American way of life, 'Communism' was perceived as a real threat to America's newly-won primacy in world affairs. The Russians' testing of an atomic bomb in August 1949 ratcheted up the political tension and heightened the climate of fear and suspicion in American public life. After 1949 each new political incident became a crisis, marked by the very real threat of a catastrophic nuclear war. When North Korea invaded South Korea in June 1950 public hysteria reached unprecedented levels.⁸⁶²

Popular paranoia was fuelled by political consensus as 'Communism' became a football that was well-kicked by American politicians. As Ellen Schrecker has noted of these years, "anti-Communism [became] the nation's official ideology."⁸⁶³ Indeed, the two main political parties in America often vied with one another in terms of their trenchant denunciation of communism: Republicans attacking the Truman administration for its soft response to the 'Red Peril'; and the Truman administration in turn, endeavouring to demonstrate a strong hand by making opposition to communism a central part of its foreign policy.⁸⁶⁴

⁸⁶⁰ Panofsky represented the School of Humanistic Studies. The other members of the selection committee were James Alexander (School of Mathematics), and Edward Mead Earle (School of Economics and Politics). For this, and the circumstances of Oppenheimer's appointment and Directorship, see *Who Got Einstein's Office?*, op. cit., 127-152.

⁸⁶¹ Panofsky's secretary even claimed that he "kow-towed" to Oppenheimer. *A Secretary's Recollections*, op. cit. For Oppenheimer's respect for Panofsky, see, Giorgio de Santillana to Panofsky, January 22nd, 1958 (2161).

⁸⁶² E.W. Schrecker, *No Ivory Tower: McCarthyism and the Universities*, 1986, p6-7.

⁸⁶³ *Ibid.*, p4-5.

⁸⁶⁴ See, D. Merrill, 'The Truman Doctrine: Containing Communism and Modernity', *Presidential Studies Quarterly*, (*Presidential Doctrines*), 36:1, March 2006, pp27-37.

Communism was considered a menace not only in the international arena, but on the home front as well. Most Americans were convinced that Communism posed a genuine threat to American national security, and fears, suspicions and accusations mounted as efforts to identify the 'enemy within' intensified. Again, these popular anxieties were given official sanction through Government legislation. In 1945 the House un-American Activities Committee (HUAC) was formed as a permanent committee in the US House of Representatives, with the sole purpose of investigating alleged disloyalty and 'subversive' politics among American citizens. In March 1947 the Truman administration then established a loyalty-security programme with Executive Order 9835. This meant that anyone employed within the Federal government who was a Communist, a suspected Communist, or even anyone who was guilty of 'sympathetic association' with Communists or communist organisations could be summarily dismissed from their post (a precedent that many other American institutions and organisations followed). This kind of Presidential decree served to legitimate and sanction the virulent anti-Communist sentiment that was increasingly prevalent in American society. Following Executive Order 9835 the FBI opened investigative files on every Federal employee, and anyone found to have incriminating links or associations had the responsibility to clear their own name. Abuses flourished, as the burden of proof did not necessarily lie with the indicter. Indeed, the FBI maintained that its system of investigation could only function if their informants had total anonymity. The reality was that an anonymous accusation could cost someone their job.

The 'Red Menace' received prominent media and public attention in 1948, when the leaders of the American Communist Party went on trial in New York accused of plotting to overthrow the American government through force and violence. This became in effect a show trial, used by the US government to publicise the menace of Communism. Public opinion and even the supposedly more liberal press backed a guilty verdict, and after a lengthy trial the eleven men were each given five year jail sentences. Even their defence attorneys were jailed for contempt of court.⁸⁶⁵ Only a few months after the end of this trial, in March 1951, Julius and Ethel Rosenberg appeared in the same court house, charged with transmitting atomic secrets to Soviet Russia. The Rosenbergs were found guilty of espionage and, after several unsuccessful appeals, were executed at Sing Sing Correctional Facility in June 1953. Although there remains considerable debate as to the veracity of the charges

⁸⁶⁵ For details of the trial see, P.L. Steinberg, *The Great 'Red Menace': United States Prosecution of American Communists, 1947-1952*, 1984. For a more general account of the threats to liberty and freedom of speech at this time, see, J. Bell, *The Liberal State on Trial: The Cold War and American Politics in the Truman Years*, 2004.

and the legality of the Rosenberg's trial and conviction, there can be no doubt that there was at the time very little public dissent in America regarding the jury's verdict and the final punishment.⁸⁶⁶

Many Americans believed that 'Communism' was so directly antagonistic and antithetical to their way of life that 'Communists' did not deserve to be protected by the American constitution. There was limited scope for reasonable, alternate opinion. By August 1954 the Communist Control Act, signed into law by the Republican President Dwight Eisenhower, outlawed the Communist Party altogether in America. As Jane Sanders has noted,

[L]iberals vied with conservatives to prove their patriotism; all pretence of due process was abandoned when...Congress passed the Communist Control Act...The near unanimity of the vote is symbolic of the lack of dissent at that time surrounding Communism as a political issue.⁸⁶⁷

The narrowness of the political spectrum, and the lack of dissent against such conformity, allowed Joseph McCarthy to gain public platform and prominence. In February 1950, in Wheeling, West Virginia, the US Senator made his now-infamous speech in which he declared that there were over 200 card-carrying Communists working in the American Department of State. Over the next four years McCarthy enjoyed the limelight, making claim after claim against 'suspect' American citizens (congressmen were constitutionally immune from lawsuits, so McCarthy did not have to worry about libel). Again, the onus was on the accused to protest and prove their innocence, and such public defamation, however unsubstantiated, could have real consequences. Countless accusations and investigations further fanned the flames of popular hysteria, and an atmosphere of fear and suspicion held sway as individuals sought to substantiate their own unimpeachable credentials by identifying and denouncing others who were considered 'questionable'.

In the years after the war Panofsky was increasingly concerned by developments in American politics and their effect upon American society. The prevalence of such a narrow-minded and zealous nationalism, and the concomitant intolerance of 'difference' or non-conformity, seemed all too worryingly familiar, and he was particularly alert to (and alarmed by) the popular, state-sanctioned drive to identify and root out a supposed 'enemy within'. As we have already seen, Panofsky was very much disturbed by a perceived upsurge in anti-Semitism in the early 40s.⁸⁶⁸ These concerns remained with him throughout that decade. Having been informed by Fritz Saxl that there was to be named a *Warburgstrasse* in Hamburg in 1948, for example, Panofsky replied with sardonic humour,

⁸⁶⁶ For a historiographical account of the debate surrounding the Rosenberg's trial and execution see, B. Schrank, 'Reading the Rosenbergs After Venona', *Labour/Le Travail*, 49, spring 2009, p189-210.

⁸⁶⁷ *Cold War on the Campus*, op. cit., pv. See also, M.S. McAuliffe, 'Liberals and the Communist Control Act of 1954', *Journal of American History*, 63:2, September 1976, pp351-367.

⁸⁶⁸ Panofsky to Betty Trotter, November 1st, 1944 (962).

*"I am very much afraid that before long there will be, by way of reciprocation, a Horst Wessel Square in Washington...I cannot help feeling terribly bitter about what is going on politically since Roosevelt's death when I think of those who have life still before themselves."*⁸⁶⁹

Panofsky's opinion of Joseph McCarthy was unequivocal. In a letter to a Republican Senator, he described McCarthy as

*"...a bully, a bouncer and an upstart who has been promoted and encouraged by the republican 'aristocracy' for their own mistaken ends. Fear and hatred are the motives and defamation of character the method of the McCarthy group for too long."*⁸⁷⁰

Panofsky then proffered a characteristically historical perspective on the public furore that McCarthy had cultivated:

*"How fantastic such nonsense will appear to future historians and how degrading and lamentable that Foreign Affairs could have been flouted and abused in such a manner for internal political ends. It will appear to future historians as deplorable as it appears in foreign capitals today."*⁸⁷¹

Panofsky quite clearly identified the more propagandistic elements of the 'Red Scare', and the dangerous levels of fear and paranoia that they engendered in the public mind. As early as September 1945 he had noted the "permanent anti-Russian propaganda in our press"⁸⁷² and he deplored the ignorance underpinning much of the popular hysteria concerning the 'Red Menace'. As he wrote to the French historian of science Alexandre Koyré,

*"We have been told so long – and as good citizens, are bound to believe – that the Russians are devils...[However] practically no one has ever seen a Communist, let alone a Russian Communist with his own eyes but looks upon them more or less as a good medieval Catholic looked upon the Evil One."*⁸⁷³

Panofsky had his own reasons for not swallowing the unremittingly negative stereotyping of 'the Russians'. Soon after the end of the war he informed Meyer Schapiro that Dora's sister had recently written from Theresienstadt,

"...where she was liberated by the Russians. There had been 150,000 people in that camp. 90,000 died, 30,000 were transferred to other, still worse camps, and the remainder were threatened by starvation and typhoid fever. She was full of praise of Russian kindness, efficiency and medical savoir-faire, and her letter was not even

⁸⁶⁹ Panofsky to Saxl, March 22nd, 1948 (1201).

⁸⁷⁰ Panofsky to Margaret Chase Smith, March 7th, 1954 (AAA).

⁸⁷¹ Ibid.

⁸⁷² Panofsky to Tarkington, September 20th, 1945 (1035).

⁸⁷³ Panofsky to Alexandre Koyré July 11th, 1956 (1965).

known to the Russian authorities, for it was transmitted to me by an American Officer who seems to have fallen in love with the old girl...I have sent an excerpt to TIME Magazine which tries to convey the impression that the Russians devoted themselves almost exclusively to rape and the theft of silk stockings; I'm curious as to whether they will print it."⁸⁷⁴

Panofsky was obviously well aware that in the America of 1950 his own 'humanistic' viewpoint was tantamount to heresy. He certainly acknowledged the stifling constrictions of the national and political consensus in America when he informed one correspondent,

"[T]he normal citizen equally opposed to fascism and Communism no longer has a possibility of giving active expression (meaning by voting) to his opinion. The understandable hostility to...'Stalinist Fascism' has resulted in an official endorsement of anti-Stalinist Fascism in all its manifestations (witness the recent recognition of Spain) and the one party that seemed to take a stand against both has not been able to maintain its integrity or even its identity. The only thing private citizens can do is to fight, as far as possible, within his own little circle of interests and activities, especially in matters of academic freedom."⁸⁷⁵

As is here indicated, one upshot of the Cold War that Panofsky found particularly disturbing was the strictures placed upon academic freedom. Once again, the émigré scholar was quick to recognise and acknowledge these developments. As early as 1946, for example, in correspondence with Tarkington in regards the atomic bomb, Panofsky noted,

*"It is interesting, though frightening, to observe how this whole situation poisons the atmosphere in our institutions of learning, primarily, of course, in the Physics and Chemistry Departments, but secondarily the whole shop."*⁸⁷⁶

As Panofsky here acknowledges, the Cold War impacted principally upon the sciences. In the post-war lurch towards a nuclear arms race the American military-industrial complex ploughed vast resources into the development of weaponry. Scientists within American universities were often coerced to work, in strictest secrecy, on military projects. As Jane Sanders has pointed out,

Increased demands for trained personnel to maintain technological, scientific, and managerial superiority in the post-war years perpetuated the symbiotic relationship between higher education and the 'military-industrial complex'. Though the billions

⁸⁷⁴ Panofsky to Schapiro, August 15th, 1945 (1027). I was unable to find any record of this letter being printed in Time Magazine. Wolfgang Panofsky had also worked with Soviet scientists during a two-week stay in Russia in 1956, and impressed upon his father the fruitfulness of this experience. Panofsky to Alexander Koyré, July 11th, 1956 (1965).

⁸⁷⁵ Panofsky to Peter Viereck, November 13th, 1950 (1409). It is likely that Panofsky is here referring to the Progressive Party, whose leader, Henry A. Wallace (candidate in the presidential elections of 1948), broke with the party in 1950 to support American military involvement in Korea.

⁸⁷⁶ Panofsky to Tarkington, February 22nd, 1946 (1072).

of dollars in federal grants and contracts brought back to American campuses after the war were an immeasurable boon to the growth of higher education, the accompanying pressures to conform to the political demands of national security became an increasing threat to the autonomy of scholarship in the United States.⁸⁷⁷

Panofsky's son Wolfgang certainly felt such pressure. After his war work at Los Alamos Wolfgang was offered a post at the University of Berkeley in California. This was a promising research position and Panofsky senior proudly reported to Tarkington how his son had accepted, "a very nice and decent offer to do pure research in the Radiation laboratory...and looks forward to work 'without worrying about the opinion of incompetent brass hats'."⁸⁷⁸ However, Berkeley (a state institution) was one of the primary sites for post-war atomic weaponry research and development, and Wolfgang soon grew uncomfortable with the role he was asked to play. A little over four months after Wolfgang had accepted the post at Berkeley, Panofsky informed Tarkington,

"My little son Wolf...has recently received a very flattering invitation to come to Princeton, but he finds it terribly difficult to make up his mind: where he is he has the apparatus he needs for the problems that are of interest to him but is badgered by the Army – were he to come here he would be a free man and save his soul but would not have the apparatus (which seems to depend on Army material)...Whatever he does, he will have misgivings (which, of course, would matter very little were not basic science to be the loser in either event). Basic science, by the way, has been defined by General Groves as 'things either known to all or easy to find out'."⁸⁷⁹

As can be construed from these letters, Panofsky senior placed a particular emphasis upon the value of 'pure' research. For him, the forcible compliance of science to military appliance was anathema. There were, Panofsky believed, entirely practical reasons why such a government policy would prove imprudent.⁸⁸⁰ But, more significantly, government interference in academic matters struck at the heart of Panofsky's deep-rooted belief in the importance of scholarly autonomy. He believed that the scholar, whether scientist or humanist, had to be left free to pursue their own research, and that universities had to function free from utilitarian demand. In Panofsky's opinion scientists should

⁸⁷⁷ Sanders, *Cold War on the Campus*, op. cit., pvi. This was a development that Oppenheimer had also predicted in his Philadelphia speech in 1945: *Atomic Weapons*, op. cit., p8.

⁸⁷⁸ Panofsky to Tarkington, October 14th, 1945 (1043).

⁸⁷⁹ Panofsky to Tarkington, February 22nd, 1946 (1072). General Leslie Groves was Director of the Manhattan Project.

⁸⁸⁰ "If this case [of government interference at Berkeley] is as typical as it would seem to be according to [Wolfgang's] letter, there is really a great danger that our silly policy will lead to a kind of sit-down, or rather walk-out, strike of the best men in physical research – so that our very obsession with 'security' and 'preparedness' will actually defeat itself by way of a direct cause-and-effect nexus." Panofsky to Booth Tarkington, October 14th, 1945 (1043).

most certainly not be diverted from 'pure' research in order to realize the practical dictates of modern warfare. With his implication clear, Panofsky wrote to Wolfgang in Berkeley,

*"Have you seen the cartoon of two scientists, chained to their laboratory tables, in the current New Yorker? Not very well drawn, but a nice idea, the presumption being that only the F.B.I. can open the locks when they must go to the bathroom or have some sleep."*⁸⁸¹

Although the sciences were particularly impacted, the effects of the Cold War and the 'Red Scare' were felt in many other areas of academic life. In March 1950, for example, McCarthy accused Owen Lattimore – a sinologist at Johns Hopkins University, and a former American adviser on international affairs – of being the "top Soviet espionage agent" in the United States.⁸⁸² Lattimore was deemed 'suspect' because he had gone on record with his view that, in light of its foreign policy interest in Asia, the United States would, at one point, have to enter into parley with the Soviet Union. Lattimore had also proffered the opinion that the autocratic government of Chiang Kai-shek was undeniably corrupt and that the United States should not simply back this regime as a matter of course. McCarthy's main charge was that Lattimore was guilty of infecting American foreign policy in favour of communist China.⁸⁸³ Though there was little in the way of substantiating evidence, the press were leaked reports, almost on a daily basis, detailing Lattimore's 'suspect' activities.⁸⁸⁴ Lattimore was then called in front of a Senate Internal Security Committee, where McCarthy employed Louis Budenz – the former managing editor of the *Daily Worker* who had renounced Communism and become a regular, *paid* government informant – to testify that he had heard Lattimore described, by Jack Stachel – one of the Communist Party officials jailed in 1949 – as a member of a communist cell.⁸⁸⁵ Budenz's testimony has since been shown to be at best uncorroborated, and at worst, total fabrication.⁸⁸⁶ Nevertheless, Lattimore was found guilty by a grand jury of seven counts of perjury, with the maximum penalty for each count 10 years imprisonment.⁸⁸⁷ Though Lattimore appealed this decision, the authorities at Johns Hopkins placed him on an immediate leave of absence. Lattimore's professional opinions were considered entirely unacceptable by the majority of Americans, and, along with the public censure that accompanied his sentence, "for approximately five years there was constant pressure on the administrative authorities of Johns Hopkins to apply strong negative sanctions" on the scholar.⁸⁸⁸ Although the

⁸⁸¹ Panofsky to Wolfgang Panofsky, March 25th, 1950 (1358).

⁸⁸² See, L.S. Lewis, *The Cold War and Academic Governance: The Lattimore Case at Johns Hopkins*, 1993, p18.

⁸⁸³ *Ibid.*, p18.

⁸⁸⁴ *Ibid.*

⁸⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, p251.

⁸⁸⁶ See V, Navasky, *Naming Names*, 1980, p13.

⁸⁸⁷ *The Cold War and Academic Governance*, op. cit., p33.

⁸⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, especially, p59-97; p59.

charges of perjury were dropped by 1955,⁸⁸⁹ McCarthy's accusations and insinuations seriously hindered Lattimore's academic life and brought an end his employment with the US government. Ultimately Lattimore felt compelled to leave the United States altogether, continuing his academic career in Britain.

The philosopher George Boas was one of the only scholars at Johns Hopkins who backed Lattimore publicly. Boas was also one of the very few American academics who openly confronted what he referred to as 'The New Authoritarianism.'⁸⁹⁰ Panofsky appreciated Boas' bravery in speaking out about the threats to academic freedom, and he kept abreast of the Lattimore case through his contact with this American colleague, offering whatever support he could give for the 'Lattimore Defense Fund'.⁸⁹¹

Panofsky was also cognisant of the impact of the 'Red Scare' on colleagues much closer to home. In 1948 Walter Cook was forced to resign his chairmanship of the Institute of Fine Arts after he was accused, by the influential Trustee Robert Lehman, of harbouring 'Communist sympathies'. After viewing an exhibition of abstract art organised by Cook, Lehman denounced the IFA Chairman and demanded his resignation, threatening to resign as Trustee if it was not forthcoming. The Provost of NYU duly asked for Cook's resignation, a request with which the despondent scholar complied.⁸⁹² Panofsky was incensed by this turn of events and quickly mobilised support for Cook among friends and colleagues in academic institutions across the East Coast. Panofsky arranged for a telegram supporting Cook's reinstatement, and bearing the names of 17 important art scholars (American and émigré), to be sent to both the Provost and the Chancellor of New York University.⁸⁹³ Informing the Harvard scholar John P. Coolidge of his actions, Panofsky wrote,

"It seemed to us that this act of arbitrariness and ingratitude sets a precedent which every decent person engaged in academic activities must abhor. If a man who has spent his entire life in faithful service to one institution can be demoted at a day's notice in deference to the whim of one influential trustee, his colleagues just have to go on record with a protest no matter how effective or ineffective this protest may be."⁸⁹⁴

⁸⁸⁹ Ibid., p165.

⁸⁹⁰ G. Boas, 'The New Authoritarianism', *Bulletin of the American Association of University Professors*, 38:3, autumn 1952, pp 390-401.

⁸⁹¹ George Boas to Panofsky, April 7th, 1953 (1587), & Panofsky to George Boas, April 13th, 1953 (AAA).

⁸⁹² For details of this affair, see Panofsky to John P. Coolidge, November 22nd, 1948 (1258).

⁸⁹³ Wire sent to Provost R.D. Smith and Chancellor H.W. Chase of New York University, November 22nd, 1948 (1258B).

⁸⁹⁴ Panofsky to John P. Coolidge, November 22nd, 1948 (1258). Cook was eventually reemployed by the IFA, though as 'Head of Department' as opposed to 'Chairman'. Cook thanked Panofsky for his support (January 5th, 1949 (1270)). Panofsky responded that it was the least he and his colleagues – "self-appointed guardians of

The academic community was particularly targeted in the McCarthy witch-hunts, and instances of dissent or organised protest were rare.⁸⁹⁵ As Jane Sanders points out,

Academics, like most Americans, acceded to the prevailing view that the Communist Party of the United States was an agency of international conspiracy directed from Moscow. As the pattern of legislative investigation and loyalty programs spread through the states, competency for teaching and research increasingly was based on the basis of political criteria. The erosion of civil liberties in the United States was thus accompanied by increasing restraints on the political and academic freedom of teachers, researchers and students.⁸⁹⁶

Academics felt substantial pressures and paid significant costs just for being *accused* of association with Communism. Three employees at the University of Washington, Seattle, were dismissed during an investigation into possible 'Communist' activity in 1948, and in September 1949 the HUAC began an investigation into alleged communist infiltration within Berkeley's Radiation Laboratory where Wolfgang worked. By the December of that year the Regents of the University, after holding their own hearing, fired a Physics teaching assistant who had appeared before the HUAC accused of being a Communist.⁸⁹⁷ Such anti-intellectualism, and its tangible impact within American academia, would have been distressingly familiar to the émigré academic.

Impingements upon academic freedom were taken very seriously by Panofsky. Nowhere is this demonstrated more than in his reaction to the introduction of loyalty oaths in American institutions of learning. As had happened in other American governmental organisations, loyalty oaths were introduced in many public universities towards the end of the 1940s. Those who refused to sign were often summarily dismissed. Wolfgang's employer, the University of Berkeley, was a particularly notable example in this regard. In the summer of 1949 the Regents of the University proposed that all employees should sign a loyalty oath which read,

I do not believe in and am not a member of, nor do I support any party or organisation that believes in, advocates, or teaches the overthrow of the United States government by force or violence.⁸⁹⁸

academic liberty" – could do "for a man to whom the profession owes so much, not to mention those personal obligations which I shall never forget." January 7th, 1949 (1271).

⁸⁹⁵ Schrecker, *No Ivory Tower*, op. cit., p10.

⁸⁹⁶ Sanders, *Cold War on the Campus*, op. cit., pvi.

⁸⁹⁷ Jackson, *Panofsky Agonistes*, op cit., p42.

⁸⁹⁸ For a contemporaneous account see, M. Radin, 'The Loyalty Oath at the University of California', *The American Scholar*, 19, 1950, pp275-284. For a more historical appraisal, see, D.P. Gardner, *The California Oath Controversy*, 1967. For further details and primary sources, see *The Loyalty Oath Controversy, University of California, 1949-51*, University of California Digital Archives, 2006, available at: http://sunsite.berkeley.edu/uchistory/archives_exhibits/loyaltyoath/timeline1949_3.html, accessed June 12th, 2013.

The majority of Faculty consented, but there was some resistance from a small group.⁸⁹⁹ A deadline of April 30th 1950 was set for those still to sign. In the meantime, a further oath was introduced by the Regents as part of a new *annual* contract, which stated,

I am not a member of the Communist Party or any other organisation which advocates the overthrow of the Government by force or violence, and...I have no commitments in conflict with my responsibilities with respect to impartial scholarship and free pursuit of truth. I understand that the foregoing statement is a condition of my employment and a consideration of payment of my salary.⁹⁰⁰

Existing academic opposition hardened. Ultimately the Regents voted, in June 1950, to fire 31 academics who had refused to sign the oath.⁹⁰¹ These 31 Faculty members were among a total of 157 university employees dismissed. In the Berkeley physics department, where Wolfgang worked, two non-signers were dismissed and two staff members resigned on principle.⁹⁰²

When the controversy at the University made national news Panofsky wrote to Wolfgang, "I [am] very much interested in the reports about your damned University."⁹⁰³ Perturbed by the fact that Wolfgang's continued employment at Berkeley suggested he had signed the oath, Panofsky was keen to hear his son's version of events. In the June of 1950 Wolfgang informed his parents that he had recently declined the offer of two jobs on the East Coast, including one from Columbia, the prestigious Ivy League research university in New York. Compelled to justify these decisions, Wolfgang told his parents,

*"One of the principal reasons for staying [in Berkeley] is the fact that I can function here as a sort of 'loyal apparitor' in the interests of pure physics...[L]ittle is served if all people still interested in pure physics just get mad and leave...I just could not see that I was solving anything by going to Columbia."*⁹⁰⁴

Wolfgang attempted to further rationalise his decision, pointing out that

*"Columbia...is not 'pure'; their 'small' cyclotron does war work entirely and also their physics department works on radar etc."*⁹⁰⁵

When Columbia returned with a more lucrative offer Wolfgang felt obliged, once again, to justify to his parents his reasons for staying in California,

⁸⁹⁹ *The California Oath Controversy*, op. cit., p263.

⁹⁰⁰ *Panofsky Agonistes*, op. cit., p42-3.

⁹⁰¹ For a list of those non-signers dismissed by the Board of Regents see the *California Oath Controversy*, op. cit., p265-6.

⁹⁰² *Ibid.*

⁹⁰³ Panofsky to Wolfgang Panofsky, March 25th, 1950 (1358).

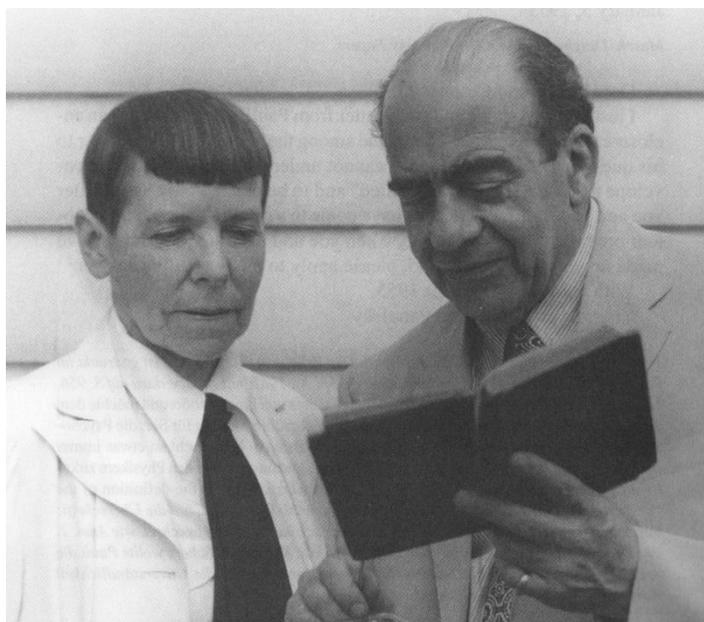
⁹⁰⁴ Wolfgang Panofsky to Dora and Erwin Panofsky, undated, c. June 1950 (1365).

⁹⁰⁵ *Ibid.*

*"...all the arguments for leaving in regards to the politics here are strong, but I always came to the sad conclusion that one is not fighting the University of California but the present politics in general which is terribly discouraging."*⁹⁰⁶

Panofsky's reaction to these letters would demonstrate the extent of his feeling in regards to the threats to academic freedom being played out in California. Though Panofsky was, initially, proud that his son had chosen 'pure' physics at Berkeley rather than war work at another institution, the introduction of the loyalty oath altered that dynamic completely. For Panofsky, with his deeply held belief in the principles of *Freiheit der Wissenschaft*, the idea of a loyalty oath was an absolute affront to the sovereignty and integrity of the scholar, and the thought that his own son had signed such an oath was the source of bitter disappointment. Hearing of Wolfgang's actions (or lack thereof) Panofsky and his wife Dora felt obliged to write a robustly worded response. Dora opened the letter by informing her son,

"Your letter, dear Wolff, shows, I am sorry to say, that you have misunderstood completely the main issue...I fear that we drive apart. Papi and I think one should do anything to fight at least for academic freedom, when other freedoms go already completely to pieces. We can't understand how anybody could sign that criminal oath-contract...and do nothing to help the few courageous who have refused to sign and have been thrown out. It seems the physicists are greater cowards than the humanists. We hear that Kantorowicz has not signed and possibly goes away...and even Walter



7. Erwin and Dora Panofsky, 1952.

*Horn who is not going to get so easily a job has not signed...The tragedy of the physicists seems to be that they are bound to their machines as Ixion on his wheel (I hope you know who he is) and thus 'conscience makes cowards of them all'."*⁹⁰⁷

Panofsky, appended his wife's admonitions by stating,

"I only want to object to your specious logic that you cannot fight all Fascism by fighting California University. Of course not. But neither can you fight Evil in general by trying to prevent – or at least not participating in – a murder at which you happen

⁹⁰⁶ Wolfgang Panofsky to Dora and Erwin Panofsky, July 22nd, 1950, (1380). For further details see, *Panofsky Agonistes*, op. cit.

⁹⁰⁷ Dora and Erwin Panofsky to Adèle and Wolfgang Panofsky, August 3rd, 1950 (1385).

to be present. In other words, if an individual is confronted with a definite situation in which he can choose between two courses of action he should decide for the right course as a matter of principle. It may or may not help the right cause in general, but this is not the point. I grant that Eisenhower [President of Columbia University] is probably no better than Sproul [President of California University]...But, speaking concretely, Columbia has as yet not taken any steps to force such a decision upon its...instructors while Berkeley has. And this is the point.”⁹⁰⁸

The next month Panofsky wrote a further letter of counsel to his son:

“What is now, I feel, imperative, is that you do not, under any account, accept a continuation of your appointment at Berkeley. If you did so, you would be considered as one who had allowed himself to be bribed by about the worst enemy of academic freedom in the whole United States.”⁹⁰⁹

He did though, offer a paternal olive branch, informing Wolfgang,

“In case your Columbia offer should have vanished in the meantime, I am prepared to share my last piece of bread with you and your expanding family.”⁹¹⁰

As the weeks passed it became evident that there had been some miscommunication between Wolfgang and his parents. Though it seems Wolfgang did initially sign the oath, before he received this second letter from his father he had already recanted his decision, resigning his post at Berkeley.⁹¹¹ Upon hearing of his son’s resignation Panofsky immediately professed himself to be

“...immensely proud and immensely relieved. I should not have minded if you had gone into Ladies’ Underwear (probably a more lucrative profession than Nuclear Physics), but I should have minded if you had stayed on at Berkeley.”⁹¹²

Panofsky was not oblivious to the financial hardship that could accompany any principled stance taken towards a loyalty oath. However, it is evident from the trenchant tone of his communications with Wolfgang that the autonomy of the scholar and the freedom of the university were, for him, matters of the utmost significance. For the state to compromise such freedom through the imposition of a mandatory oath of loyalty was, for Panofsky, absolutely abhorrent.

⁹⁰⁸ Ibid.

⁹⁰⁹ Panofsky to Wolfgang Panofsky, September 18th, 1950 (1389).

⁹¹⁰ Ibid.

⁹¹¹ Wolfgang had agreed to finish his term at Berkeley. Wolfgang Panofsky to Panofsky, September 23rd, 1950 (1393). In this letter Wolfgang also referred to a “general distortion of facts as they are being transmitted from West to East.”

⁹¹² Panofsky to Wolfgang Panofsky, September 26th, 1950 (1395). In a subsequent letter Panofsky reiterated to Wolfgang his “deep satisfaction with your decision to leave Berkeley.” Panofsky to Wolfgang Panofsky, January 15th, 1951 (1428).

This was a conviction held strongly by other émigré scholars too. Ernst Kantorowicz, the émigré medievalist, steadfastly refused to sign the Berkeley oath on principle. Kantorowicz was a contemporary of Panofsky, a humanist scholar whose intellectual outlook was also determined by his early life and career in Germany.⁹¹³ Upon resigning from Berkeley Kantorowicz felt compelled, from both a personal and a professional point of view, to provide a response to the abuses of academic freedom there perpetrated. *The Fundamental Issue: Documents and Marginal Notes on the University of California Loyalty Oath*, a collection of documents, letters and personal meditations, was an impassioned defence of the humanistic traditions of scholarship enshrined within the German university.⁹¹⁴ It was a ‘humanistic’ perspective made all the more prescient by the fact that Kantorowicz was able to address these issues in light of his own significant historical experience.

As Kantorowicz stated in a ‘Prefatory Note’,

What the fundamental issue is has been obvious to me from the minute the controversy started. Perhaps I have been sensitive because both my professional experience as an historian and my personal experience in Nazi Germany have conditioned me to be alert when I hear again certain familiar tones sounded. Rather than renounce this experience, which is indeed synonymous with my ‘life’, I shall place it, for what it is worth, at the disposal of my colleagues who are fighting the battle for the dignity of their profession and their university.⁹¹⁵

In response to those who would claim that if a citizen had nothing to hide then the oath was ‘harmless’, Kantorowicz pointed out,

The harmlessness of the proposed oath is not a protection when a principle is involved. A harmless oath formula which conceals the true issue, is always the most dangerous one because it baits even the old and experienced fish. It is the harmless oath that hooks; hooks before it has undergone those changes that will render it, bit by bit, less harmless. Mussolini Italy of 1931, Hitler Germany of 1933, are terrifying

⁹¹³ For an account of Kantorowicz as a ‘humanist’ see Y. Malkiel, ‘Ernst H. Kantorowicz’, in *On Four Modern Humanists: Hofmannsthal, Gundolf, Curtius, Kantorowicz*, A.R. Evans Jr. ed., 1970, pp146-219.

⁹¹⁴ *The Fundamental Issue: Documents and Marginal Notes on the University of California Loyalty Oath*, was published in 1950, with the motto of the University of California emblazoned on its frontispiece: *FIAT LUX*.

⁹¹⁵ *The Fundamental Issue*, *ibid.*, p1. Kantorowicz also included in his publication an excerpt from a letter written by the émigré art historian Walter Horn to the President of the University of California, Robert Sproul: “It was in avoidance of pressures of this type that I left Germany in 1938 and came to this country. And it was in the desire of contributing to the eradication of such methods that I volunteered during the last war to take up arms against the country of my birth. I am expecting my recall to active duty in the present conflict with the bitter feeling that, this time, I shall be fighting abroad for the defense and propagation of Freedoms which I have been denied in my professional life at home.” *The Fundamental Issue*, p8.

and warning examples for the harmless bit-by-bit procedure in connection with political enforced oaths.⁹¹⁶

Genuinely shocked by events at Berkeley, Kantorowicz called into question the very organisation of the American university – where a body of Regents could wilfully dictate terms and conditions to their ‘employees’. Indeed, in a specific response to one Regent who had claimed that there was “no distinction between janitors and professors, since both are ‘employees of the regents’” Kantorowicz pointed out,

[T]he comparison between janitor and professor is misleading because it is fundamentally wrong. A university could exist without gardeners and janitors, who are accessory; it could hardly exist without professors and students, who are essential, actually the only essential part of a university.⁹¹⁷

Kantorowicz then provided a historical context for his understanding of the ‘University’:

According to the oldest definitions, which run back to the thirteenth century, ‘The University’ is the *universitas magistrorum et scholarium*, ‘The Body Corporate of Masters and Students’. Teachers and students together are the University, regardless of the existence of gardens and buildings, or care-takers of gardens and buildings. One can envisage a university without a single gardener or janitor, without a single secretary, and even – a bewitching mirage – without a single Regent. The constant and essence of a University is always the body of teachers and students.⁹¹⁸

Émigré scholars such as Kantorowicz and Panofsky considered themselves representatives of this long and venerable tradition – this understanding of the University as a collection of responsible, autonomous individuals, devoted solely to research.⁹¹⁹ This was, of course, the ideal that Humboldt had helped codify in German universities at the beginning of the nineteenth century. For many émigré scholars, the issue of the loyalty oath brought into sharp focus just how different was the conception of the University in America. Kantorowicz went on to point out how, in his understanding, the academic held a status in accord with that of the judge and the priest; and the integrity of this status *depended* upon the scholar’s autonomy and their freedom of conscience:

There are three professions which are entitled to wear a gown: the judge, the priest, the scholar. This garment stands for its bearer’s maturity of mind, his independence of judgement, and his direct responsibility to his conscience...It signifies the inner

⁹¹⁶ Ibid., p5.

⁹¹⁷ Ibid., p15.

⁹¹⁸ Ibid., p16.

⁹¹⁹ In an essay published less than three years after Kantorowicz’s *The Fundamental Issue* Panofsky proffered the exact same definition of the University: “*universitas magistrorum et scholarium*”. See, ‘The History of Art’, in Crawford (ed.), *The Cultural Migration*, op. cit., p102.

sovereignty of those three interrelated professions: they should be the very last to allow themselves to act under duress and yield to pressure.⁹²⁰

This, for Kantorowicz, was the 'fundamental issue' involved with the reprehensible actions of the Regents at the University of California. As well as challenging the individual and professional freedom of the scholar, forced compliance with a mandatory loyalty oath had thrown into question the very identity and role of the University scholar:

It is a shameful and undignified action, it is an affront and a violation of both human sovereignty and professional dignity that the Regents of this University have dared to bully the bearer of this gown into a situation in which he is compelled to give up either his tenure or, together with his freedom of judgement, his human dignity and his responsible sovereignty as a scholar.⁹²¹

Kantorowicz's principled stance resonated deeply with Panofsky's own 'humanistic' viewpoint. Indeed, upon leaving Berkeley Kantorowicz was offered a permanent place at the IAS, largely at the behest of Panofsky, and the medieval scholar took up permanent residence in Princeton in 1951.⁹²² The two men soon forged an extremely close and lasting friendship.⁹²³ Panofsky held Kantorowicz in the highest regard for his scholarship, but also for the stand he had taken in 1950. In a poignant obituary written for his friend in 1964, Panofsky would assert,

Kantorowicz merited as much honor as a man as he won as a scholar. In 1949-51, when at the University of California the Regents imposed a special oath of loyalty on the members of the Faculty, he steadily and publicly defended those ideals of human and academic freedom which he had learned to cherish as a student of the great historical tradition of 'humanitas' and 'dignitas', and as an observer as well as an uncompromising foe of tyranny in Germany. Who better than he could understand the weaknesses and the evil principle involved in special oaths exacted by the ruler or the State?⁹²⁴

Perhaps emboldened and encouraged by Kantorowicz's example, Panofsky was compelled to provide his own pronouncement on the importance of academic freedom. Panofsky's statement *In Defense of the Ivory Tower* was a little more oblique than Kantorowicz's essay. Indeed, ostensibly executed on the rarefied level of iconographical scholarship, Panofsky's contribution traced the history and development of the Ivory Tower motif, from its appearance in the Song of Songs through

⁹²⁰ *The Fundamental Issue*, op. cit., p6.

⁹²¹ *Ibid.*, p6.

⁹²² Kantorowicz to Panofsky, January 5th, 1951 (1423).

⁹²³ See, Panofsky to Charles R.D. Miller, October 16th, 1963 (AAA).

⁹²⁴ E. Panofsky (together with G. Post, & J.R. Strayer), 'Memoirs of Fellows and Corresponding Fellows of the Medieval Academy of America: Ernst Hartwig Kantorowicz', *Speculum*, 39:3, July 1964, pp596-7; p597.

its transformations in the work of Milton, Charles-Augustin Sainte Beuve and Henry James.⁹²⁵ However, the real thrust and intent of this essay would have been clear to all who read it.

Panofsky began by indicating the anti-intellectual trends he had experienced in America,

The phrase 'He lives in an ivory tower' has come to be, in this country at least, about the most insulting remark that can be passed without leading to an action for slander or libel.⁹²⁶

He then expanded upon the pejorative implications of the term:

It combines the stigma of egotistic self-isolation (on account of the tower) with that of snobbery (on account of the ivory) and dreamy inefficiency (on account of both). In recent journalistic usage, the 'ivory tower' can even designate, not only the place where the impractical artist, writer or professor is supposed to live but also – perhaps by way of confusion with the 'castle in the air' – the futile ideas or pipe dreams which he is supposed to think up.⁹²⁷

Panofsky then reiterated that this anti-intellectualism was a specifically American phenomenon, associated with an aversion to any kind of elitism or philosophic idealism:

The American aversion to ivory towers – for it is only in American writing that the implications of the simile are downright vituperative – may be accounted for by a deep-seated antipathy, not only against detachment but also against sophistication.⁹²⁸

It was in response to these trends that Panofsky outlined his *Defense of the Ivory Tower*:

A tower...prevents its occupant from being as active as those who live outside... [However] in speaking of 'observation' as well as 'thought' and 'imagination', I have alluded to another property of the tower. It is not only a place of seclusion (or, if you will, of escape) but also a lookout: it is, as Milton himself did not fail to stress, not only 'lonely' but 'high'. Height, needless to say, widens the horizon of the observer and thus enables him to see things in a perspective rather different from that in which they present themselves when swirling around him on ground level.⁹²⁹

In making a virtue out of those qualities associated with the Ivory Tower Panofsky was providing, once again, an apology for the *vita contemplativa*. In Panofsky's eyes, it was essential that the

⁹²⁵ E. Panofsky, 'In Defense of the Ivory Tower', in *The Association of Princeton Graduate Alumni* (Report of the Third Conference held at the Graduate College of Princeton University, January 1-3, 1953), 3, 1953, pp77-84.

⁹²⁶ All quotations, unless otherwise indicated, are taken from the typed, and annotated copy of this address contained in The Erwin Panofsky Papers, 1904-1990, AAA, Box17, unfiled, *In Defense of the Ivory Tower*, 1953, pp1-9; p1.

⁹²⁷ *Ibid*, p2.

⁹²⁸ *Ibid.*, p3.

⁹²⁹ *Ibid.*, p5-6.

scholar be left free to think and to *understand*. Indeed, it was the scholar's capacity for reflection and meditation, their aptitude for 'objective' contemplation, which provided their ultimate purpose and *raison d'être*:

The man on the ground has the power to act; but he has not the power to see, nor can he escape from the net which destiny and his own previous deeds have woven around him. The man on the tower has the power to see but not the power to act; the only thing he can do is warn. And here we touch upon what amounts to a kind of 'social responsibility' after all – a responsibility which devolves upon the tower dweller not in spite of but because of the fact that he dwells in a tower. The tower of seclusion, the tower of 'selfish bliss', the tower of meditation, the tower of equanimity – this tower is also a watchtower. Whenever the occupant perceives a danger to life or liberty, he has the opportunity, even the duty, not only to 'signal along the line from summit to summit' but also to yell, on the slim chance of being heard, to those on the ground.⁹³⁰

Panofsky then provided historical examples of intellectuals who had fulfilled such purpose, even when faced with overwhelming opposition and resistance:

Socrates, Erasmus of Rotterdam, Galileo, Voltaire, Zola, Theodor Mommsen, the seven professors of Göttingen, Albert Einstein – all tower dwellers if ever there were any – have raised their voices when they felt that there was danger to liberty. And though these voices were often ignored or even silenced at the time, they continue to ring in the ears of posterity.⁹³¹

In response to the incursions on individual and academic freedom that he had witnessed in America Panofsky was reasserting that the scholar *had* to be free and independent in order to fulfil his role.⁹³² For Panofsky, as for Kantorowicz, it was the scholar's duty and responsibility to maintain this independence, and to utilise their own conscience. Any restriction of this autonomy undermined the role and the very purpose of scholarship itself.

Panofsky was, of course, ensconced within his own 'Ivory Tower' at the IAS. As a member of this private research institution he did not encounter the same kind of pressures as those at state institutions faced with government loyalty oaths. It could be suggested therefore, that it was relatively easy for Panofsky to profess such an unequivocally 'idealistic' stance in regards the principles of the Ivory Tower. However, as has been pointed out, Panofsky was not unaware of the financial implications of any 'idealistic' stance. Furthermore, when Panofsky was himself confronted with a loyalty oath he flatly refused to sign it.

⁹³⁰ *Ibid.*, p8-9.

⁹³¹ *Ibid.*, p10.

⁹³² *Ibid.*, p11.

In early 1961 Panofsky accepted an invitation to provide a series of lectures and seminars that summer at the University of California, Santa Barbara.⁹³³ Following a prolonged correspondence, arrangements were confirmed in the spring of that year. Panofsky had booked his and Dora's flights and accommodation, and the University had brochures and advertising materials printed and distributed to promote the forthcoming visit and lecture series. At the beginning of May Panofsky then received his contract from the University in the post. In the accompanying letter he read, "The form for the loyalty oath is on the back of Page 1."⁹³⁴ Although the section of the University's loyalty oath that had caused such controversy in the early 1950s had since been deemed unconstitutional, all state workers who were American citizens were still (and are still) required by the constitution of California State to sign a loyalty oath.

Upon receiving this letter Panofsky replied promptly to his California correspondent,

*"Much to my regret I must send the papers back unsigned because I am unwilling to sign the loyalty oath required by the University of California. I have no sympathy with either Communism or the Marxist interpretation of history...But neither am I in sympathy...with the exaction of loyalty oaths within the academic sphere. I should not be able to face students with a good conscience were I to violate a principle which I have consistently defended for an uncounted number of years."*⁹³⁵

Though apologies and entreaties from the University followed, Panofsky did not countenance signing the oath.⁹³⁶ Scholarly autonomy remained an integral part of his professional creed, and a matter of the utmost principle.

It would also be a mistake to presume that Panofsky's position at the independent IAS meant he was safely cocooned from the consequences of the 'Red Scare' at its height. Indeed, precisely because of his association with the IAS, and with J. Robert Oppenheimer, Panofsky was caught up in an infamous trial often considered representative of the worst excesses of the McCarthy period.

In November 1952 General Dwight D. Eisenhower won the American presidential election race, thus ending twenty years of Democratic administration. Eisenhower came to power on the promise that he would address the slackness of the Truman administration in its approach to subversives and security risks within the United States government. Truman's Executive Order 9385 was deemed a failure and revoked, and Eisenhower introduced a new and more stringent loyalty programme under Executive Order 10450. As one commentator has noted, under the terms of this new Order,

⁹³³ Panofsky to Samuel B. Gould, March 3rd, 1961 (AAA).

⁹³⁴ Lewis F. Walton to Panofsky, May 11th, 1961 (2661).

⁹³⁵ Panofsky to Lewis F. Walton, May 15th, 1961 (2664).

⁹³⁶ Panofsky to Millard Meiss, May 18th, 1961 (AAA).

A government employee had not only to be adjudged 'loyal' to serve his country; his background had to be such that his employment by the government was 'clearly consistent with the interests of national security.' For most Federal agencies, new and broader screening criteria were put into effect. Security officers were given wider authority to screen out job-holders and applicants with 'derogatory information' in their dossiers. All Federal agencies...were given the power summarily to suspend suspected 'security risks'...The cases of some nineteen thousand civil servants whose 'full field' investigations had turned up 'derogatory information', but who had been cleared under the old Truman loyalty program, were to be 'readjudicated' under the new, more severe screening standards.⁹³⁷

Of particular concern to the new administration was the security of the US defence industry and its nuclear weapons development. It was thought that the Russians' detonation of an atomic bomb in 1949 had only been made possible through Soviet espionage on American soil. Security checks and investigations into the work done at Los Alamos and Berkeley, already begun under Truman, received new impetus and further consequence under Executive Order 10450.

Oppenheimer was heavily implicated in these investigations and his conduct in governmental affairs as well as his personal history came under intense scrutiny by the FBI. In November 1953 William Borden, former Executive Director of Congress' powerful Joint Committee on Atomic Energy, sent a letter to J. Edgar Hoover, Director of the FBI, which read,

*"The purpose of this letter is to state in my own exhaustively considered opinion, based upon years of study of the available classified evidence, that more probably than not, J. Robert Oppenheimer is an agent of the Soviet Union."*⁹³⁸

Having traversed the four-and-a-half foot high file on Oppenheimer accumulated by the FBI, Borden had learned that in the years before the war the physicist was 'actively involved' with the radical left and with known Communists. He also discovered that Oppenheimer's brother and sister-in-law were Communist Party members, and that his wife Kitty had previously been married to a Communist and had herself once been a member of the Party.⁹³⁹

Oppenheimer had also become suspect to Borden, as to many others within the American government and military, because he had, in the post-war period, consistently opposed efforts to strengthen the American nuclear arsenal. The suspicion within certain government circles was that Oppenheimer had used his considerable influence and charisma to discourage and delay other scientists from participating in the development of the new 'Super' hydrogen bomb; a weapon which it was thought would help consolidate American dominance on the world stage.

⁹³⁷ P.M. Stern, *The Oppenheimer Case: Security on Trial*, 1969, p201.

⁹³⁸ *Ibid.*, p1.

⁹³⁹ *Ibid.*, p2.

For Borden, Oppenheimer's actions and sentiments amounted to 'Un-American activity' and with his letter to J. Edgar Hoover he sought to initiate punitive actions against this subversive scientist. Hoover was of a like mind and took a special interest in the Oppenheimer case. As one commentator has noted, "Oppenheimer was anathema to Hoover because of his former left-wing affiliations and what Hoover regarded as moral and character deficiencies."⁹⁴⁰ The FBI investigation into Oppenheimer's activities was stepped up, and his movements were shadowed, his mail intercepted, and his home in Princeton bugged.⁹⁴¹ Borden's letter also found its way onto the desk of the President, and in December 1953 Eisenhower directed that Oppenheimer's security clearance be revoked. The scientist was duly informed of the security charges against him and his right to a hearing.⁹⁴²

Oppenheimer's public hearing lasted from April 12th until May 6th 1954, and generated a huge amount of press and public interest. The charges levied against Oppenheimer became a kind of test case for Executive Order 10450, and, as one commentator has noted, the Atomic Energy Commission (AEC) played "an eager and often savage prosecutor role."⁹⁴³ It has even been claimed that in their eagerness to secure incriminating evidence the American government went so far as to use electronic devices to listen in to private conferences between Oppenheimer and his attorney.⁹⁴⁴

Oppenheimer was never formally charged with any federal offence. However, at his hearing the AEC Board voted against the restoration of his security clearance on the grounds that he had shown a "susceptibility to influence", as well as "a serious disregard for the requirements of the security system." They also surmised that the conduct of the physicist in regards the development of the H-Bomb had been "disturbing", and his testimony "less than candid."⁹⁴⁵ The general manager of the AEC further stoked the flames of the public's fury, describing Oppenheimer in the popular press as "not reliable or trustworthy" and "a Communist in every sense except that he did not carry a party card."⁹⁴⁶

In light of such charges, and the huge media interest, Oppenheimer was subjected to no little public pillory. Indeed, according to Harold Green,

⁹⁴⁰ H.P. Green 'The Oppenheimer Case: A Study in the Abuse of Law', *Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists*, September 1977, pp12-16 & pp56-61; p16.

⁹⁴¹ See Regis, *Who Got Einstein's Office?*, op. cit., p150.

⁹⁴² *The Oppenheimer Case: A Study in the Abuse of Law*, p13.

⁹⁴³ *The Oppenheimer Case: Security on Trial*, p4.

⁹⁴⁴ *Ibid.*

⁹⁴⁵ *The Oppenheimer Case: A Study in the Abuse of Law*, p13.

⁹⁴⁶ *The Oppenheimer Case: Security on Trial*, p396-7.

[J. Edgar] Hoover was determined that...Oppenheimer would not emerge with his credulity and reputation intact, and the Administration was determined to exact the pound of flesh demanded by Executive Order 10450. Moreover, the case was seen in political terms as another opportunity to demonstrate that the previous Democratic administrations had been harbouring dangerous subversives.⁹⁴⁷

Press reportage of Oppenheimer's conduct, and of the hearing in general, focussed upon the worrying implications of any 'Un-American activity', and this helped foster the notion that this well-known scientist was indeed 'suspect'. As Philip Stern has pointed out,

Editorial reaction to the AEC decision was almost unanimously favourable to the majority decision not to reinstate [Oppenheimer's] security clearance. Even the usually liberal New York Post...concluded that 'Dr Oppenheimer is clearly guilty of arbitrariness and deceit.'⁹⁴⁸

One acquaintance who was with Oppenheimer and his wife Kitty when the decision of the AEC appeared in the newspapers reported that they were deeply disturbed and saddened by "the one-sided and savage character of the majority opinion."⁹⁴⁹ Following his hearing, and an unsuccessful appeal, Oppenheimer largely withdrew from public life. He was able to spend more time in Princeton in his capacity as Director of the IAS, but it has been suggested that he never fully recovered and that his public humiliation and 'defeat' left him a broken man.⁹⁵⁰

Panofsky followed the Oppenheimer case, and the press coverage, closely. Oppenheimer had been director of the IAS for seven years by this point, and Panofsky was greatly concerned about the effects of the trial on his friend and 'Chief'. During the hearing, on the occasion of Oppenheimer's fiftieth birthday, Panofsky sent a letter of support to Kitty Oppenheimer:

*"[Y]ou cannot hear often enough how deeply disgusted and shocked every decent person is, to see how America treats one of her best and greatest citizens. One has to go back to Greece to find parallels in meanness towards great men, where one should thank and praise...Please be convinced that the whole Institute from Einstein to the youngest secretary are deeply devoted to you both and suffer with you."*⁹⁵¹

As well as this concern for the well-being of his two friends, Panofsky was apprehensive that the trial and public scrutiny might affect Oppenheimer's position at the IAS. During his trial Oppenheimer had been forced to deny reports that he was going to resign his Directorship,⁹⁵² and Panofsky was

⁹⁴⁷ *The Oppenheimer Case: A Study in the Abuse of Law*, p59.

⁹⁴⁸ *The Oppenheimer Case: Security on Trial*, p425.

⁹⁴⁹ Lloyd Garrison, as quoted in *Ibid*, p424.

⁹⁵⁰ See, Regis, *Who Got Einstein's Office?*, p150-1.

⁹⁵¹ Panofsky to Kitty Oppenheimer, April 22nd, 1954 (1694).

⁹⁵² *The Oppenheimer Case: Security on Trial*, op. cit., p425.

particularly anxious about how the IAS Trustees would react should Oppenheimer not be exonerated. As Panofsky wrote to his close friend Adolph Katzenellenbogen,

“All strictly academic matters, first of all that of appointing or removing faculty members and directors, are in the hands of the Board of Trustees... Our main problem (by ‘our’ I mean the Faculty) is to prevent them from doing anything rash and possibly irrevocable should O. not be ‘cleared’...I can tell you in confidence that private steps have been taken to acquaint the Board with the very serious reactions that may result from any rash decision on their part; but, needless to say, since we, the egg-heads, have no statutory rights in the matters at all, we must avoid the appearance of pressure. I and a few others are willing to fight the thing through if the worst comes to the worst; but to what extent such a fight can be made effective (viz., unanimous) remains to be seen, and for the time being we must try not to antagonize the Board in advance; we can only a), hope that they will behave themselves; b), not make it difficult for them to behave; and c), keep our powder or plutonium dry in case they don’t.”⁹⁵³

When Oppenheimer’s appeal against the decision of the AEC was unsuccessful, Panofsky, Einstein and the classicist Harold Cherniss, drafted a statement of support for their ‘Chief’. This statement was signed by their fellow Faculty members and released to the press.⁹⁵⁴ Printed in *The New York Times* on the first of July, this unequivocal statement of support read,

We, who have known him as a colleague, as Director of our own institution, and as a neighbour in a small and intimate community, had from the first complete confidence in his loyalty to the United States, his discretion in guarding its secrets, and his deep concern for its safety, strength, and welfare. Our confidence in his loyalty and patriotic devotion remains unimpaired as our admiration for his magnificent public service is undiminished. Dr Oppenheimer has performed for this country service of another kind, more indirect and less conspicuous but nevertheless, we believe, of great significance. For seven years now he has with inspired devotion directed the work of the Institute for Advanced Study, for which he has proved himself singularly well suited by the unique combination of his personality, his broad scientific interests, and his acute scholarship. We are proud to give public expression at this time to our loyal appreciation of the many benefits that we all derive from our association with him in this capacity.⁹⁵⁵

Ultimately Oppenheimer remained in position at the IAS, but Panofsky considered the case a symbolic and sorry indictment of American society. In Panofsky’s eyes Oppenheimer had been attacked for assuming the responsibility and for having the courage to proffer an independent voice

⁹⁵³ Panofsky to Adolph Katzenellenbogen, April 17th, 1954 (1691).

⁹⁵⁴ Harold Cherniss to Panofsky, July 1st, 1954 (1703).

⁹⁵⁵ ‘Colleagues back Dr Oppenheimer’ *The New York Times*, Thursday July 1st, 1954, p14. The statement was also published on the same day in *The Herald Tribune*.

of reason in response to the mindless conformism of the day. Though never formally prosecuted for any wrongdoing, this once-celebrated scientist was widely discredited in the public sphere for his 'humanistic' viewpoint. For Panofsky the case spoke volumes in regards to the anti-intellectualism and the narrowness of the national-political consensus in America at the time.

Always sensitive to historical parallels, Panofsky was impressed by a book, published a few years later in which the trial of Oppenheimer was compared to that of Galileo in the sixteen century. In the preface to *The Crime of Galileo*, Giorgio de Santillana wrote,

[W]e may perceive in the Oppenheimer case a parallel which is a shade too close for comfort...[A]s the story unfolds before the public, the exact analogy in structure, in symptoms and behaviours shows us we are dealing with the same disease. Through the little that we are allowed to know, we can discern the scientific mind as it has ever been – with its free-roaming curiosity, its unconventional interests, its detachment, its ancient and somewhat esoteric set of values – surprised by policy decisions dictated by 'Reasons of State' or what are judged to be such.⁹⁵⁶

Panofsky received a copy this book from his friend, George Sarton. Judging the book "an excellent piece of work", Panofsky admitted to Sarton, "I have looked through it only fleetingly because I wanted to pass it on to my chief, who naturally will take a great interest in it."⁹⁵⁷

Soon after Oppenheimer's trial ended Panofsky travelled to Belgium to participate in an art seminar in Brussels. From onboard the RMS Noordam he wrote to Margaret Barr with details of "the Oppenheimer affair". At the end of his letter, Panofsky informed his American friend, herself travelling in Europe at the time, "You better burn this letter before returning to the USA. I should not have written it from Princeton where everybody is under surveillance."⁹⁵⁸ This postscript may seem a little melodramatic to a modern reader; perhaps indicative of the paranoia that permeated American life in the nineteen-forties and fifties. There can be no doubt that Oppenheimer was subject to heavy surveillance during his tenure at the IAS in Princeton.⁹⁵⁹ But did Panofsky really have to be careful about what he wrote and said in his own private communications?

It is a matter of fact that the FBI did indeed hold an extensive file on Panofsky; and this not simply a by-product of his association with J. Robert Oppenheimer.⁹⁶⁰ An FBI report dated December 14th,

⁹⁵⁶ G. De Santillana, *The Crime of Galileo*, 1955, pviii.

⁹⁵⁷ Panofsky to George Sarton, April 4th, 1955 (1786).

⁹⁵⁸ Panofsky to Margaret Barr, June 25th, 1954 (1702a).

⁹⁵⁹ *The Oppenheimer Case: A Study in the Abuse of Law*, p57.

⁹⁶⁰ On February 17th, 2010 I made a Freedom of Information-Privacy Act (FOIPA) request to the FBI for files related to Erwin Panofsky (Request No.: 1144123-000, Subject: Panofsky, Erwin). On June 24th, 2010 I received a collection of the FBI files on Panofsky, covering the period June 30th 1949 – March 1966. Of the 266 pages in Panofsky's file reviewed following my FOIPA request, 173 were released. The rest remain restricted.

1950 noted that Panofsky's name had appeared in the *Daily Worker* as a sponsor of a conference held in New York to initiate a call for an immediate ceasefire in Korea and friendly trade relations with China. A cross check in the FBI files indicated that Panofsky had also lent his name to other organisations on the FBI 'suspect' list.⁹⁶¹ This was deemed sufficient grounds by the FBI to open a file "to determine Dr Panofsky's background." An FBI agent in the Princeton area "having established sources at the Institute for Advanced Study", was duly requested to "obtain all available information on Dr Panofsky – Position, type of research, citizenship, description, associates, residence address etc."⁹⁶²

The investigation into Panofsky's background and activities was stepped up when, in June 1951, Louis Budenz went on record stating,

Before I left the Communist party in 1945, I heard Professor Panofsky referred to several times as a Communist by Trachtenberg and also by Jack Stachel, most generally in connection with Einstein and with communist front activities.⁹⁶³

In light of this information, the FBI built up a substantial file on Panofsky, and on his family, friends, and collegiate relationships.

From examination of the files one gains a sense of the kind of subjective opinion and tittle-tattle that the FBI would record and use to build up a profile of those under investigation. One confidential source within the IAS, for example, informed an FBI Agent that,

...over a period of years and from 'bits' of conversation with the subject [Panofsky], she is of the opinion that he is definitely in favour with Communism. He always speaks favourably of Russia and her activities, but condemns and talks unfavourably concerning the United States and her activities.⁹⁶⁴

This opinion was then 'corroborated' by "Newark Confidential Informant T-7, of known reliability", with the FBI report stating that

⁹⁶¹ It was noted in the FBI file that Panofsky had signed an open letter to Senators and Congressmen urging the defeat of President Truman's arms programme. His name was also recorded as a sponsor of the 'Free the Trenton Six rally' held in Trenton, New Jersey on June 25th 1949. The 'Trenton Six' were young African American men accused of the murder of an elderly white shopkeeper in New Jersey. They were found guilty, by an all-white jury, on questionable evidence, and sentenced to death. The Communist Party then took on the legal defence of three of the men during their appeal; the main lawyer being Emanuel Hirsch Bloch, the man who went on to defend the Rosenbergs. Initial FBI reports on Panofsky note that he had also lent his name to sponsorship of an "Emergency Conference of World Peace in China"; and it was recorded that "other sponsors and speakers at this conference were frequently named Soviet apologists." FBI Memo sent from William G. Bedell to S. K. McKee, December 14th, 1950.

⁹⁶² FBI Memo sent by William G. Bedell to S. K. McKee, January 3rd, 1951.

⁹⁶³ FBI Report of Budenz interview with William J. McCarthy Jr. July 3rd, 1951. Both Stachel and Trachtenberg were leading members of the American Communist Party.

⁹⁶⁴ FBI Report made by Vincent E. Murphy July 30th, 1951.

The informant has known subject, PANOFSKY for several years and at the time of the trial of the 11 leaders of the Communist Party in the US District Court...he heard subject make remarks which the informant could not quote exactly, but which definitely indicated to the informant that PANOFSKY felt these defendants had not received a fair trial and had been unjustly treated. The informant stated that subject PANOFSKY was a close friend of one STANLEY MELTZOFF. It was also the informant's opinion that both MELTZOFF and PANOFSKY were probably Communist sympathisers but he could not provide any specific information upon which to base this conclusion.⁹⁶⁵

Detailing the views of another Princeton informant, the same report continued,

Newark Confidential Informant T-8, of known reliability, advised that he was surprised to learn that Panofsky was very pro-Russian in his views to the extent that everything the Russians did was right and that the United States was always entirely wrong.⁹⁶⁶

The FBI file also noted that both Erwin and Dora Panofsky were very much against the use and development of atomic weapons. One report for example, stated that Mrs John A. Wheeler, the wife of the Princeton Physicist, described how,

PANOFSKY and his wife, DORA Panofsky, barely speak to them in view of the fact that Mrs'. WHEELER'S husband was involved in atomic research and the PANOFSKYS considered them 'mass murderers'.⁹⁶⁷

Even although their information was based on hearsay, and personal opinion, the FBI considered Panofsky 'suspect' enough to widen their inquiry into his activities beyond Princeton. FBI agents proceeded to interview known colleagues and associates of Panofsky at the universities of Harvard, New York, Notre Dame and Yale. It was also discovered that Panofsky's brother-in-law, Eric Mosse, then living in New York, had been active in "Communist intellectual circles" in Germany, and that his party name had been "Peter Flamm".⁹⁶⁸ The FBI then used a source working within the IAS to acquire a "30-day mail cover", comprising over 100 letters received by Panofsky during the period August to September, 1951.⁹⁶⁹ The correspondence from this period was noted to have contained "numerous items from foreign sources", and Agent Lovering suggested in a report that "the Bureau

⁹⁶⁵ FBI Report made by Thomas S. Lovering, January 17th, 1952.

⁹⁶⁶ Ibid.

⁹⁶⁷ FBI Report made by Thomas Lovering, August 12th, 1952.

⁹⁶⁸ FBI Report made by John J. Connolly, November 3rd, 1952.

⁹⁶⁹ In a report detailing this operation, Agent Thomas Lovering noted that, "Newark Confidential Informant T-1, of known reliability, stated that from 8/17/51 to 9/17/51 the subject received the following correspondence at his home, 97 Battle Road and at his office in the Institute for Advanced Study." FBI Report, August 13th, 1952.

may desire to check the names of these foreign individuals and organisations through the Bureau indices.”⁹⁷⁰

The FBI investigation meant Panofsky had difficulty obtaining a passport for travel outside of America on two different occasions during the 1950s. In March 1952 the FBI were informed by a secretary at the IAS that Panofsky was intending to travel to Europe; and a memo sent by special messenger from the office of J. Edgar Hoover notified the Passport Division of the US State Department that “it will be appreciated if you will furnish to this Bureau any pertinent information you may receive concerning the subject’s activities while travelling abroad.”⁹⁷¹ Panofsky seems to have been well aware of this interest in his activities. In a letter to the art historian Louis Grodecki, for example, he noted his intention to travel to Europe that summer, “provided the State Department, which does not love me very much, gives me a passport.”⁹⁷²

By 1954 Panofsky was in no doubt that the authorities considered him ‘suspect’. When the émigré scholar experienced difficulty in obtaining his passport once again, Frank Aydelotte, former Director of the IAS, was moved to write to one Ruth Shipley at the Department of State,

*“Professor Panofsky tells me that there has been some delay about his passport and that he has received inquiries from you as to whether he or his wife are or ever have been members of the Communist party. To anyone who knows the Panofskys this inquiry is merely humorous. It would be impossible to find a stauncher citizen of the United States or a firmer believer in democracy or a more vigorous opponent of Communism or of totalitarianism in any form.”*⁹⁷³

After providing an unequivocally positive character reference for Panofsky, Aydelotte then notified Shipley, “I should be grateful, as he would, if the State Department could give him an assurance in the near future that there will be no difficulty.”⁹⁷⁴ Panofsky received his passport soon after.⁹⁷⁵ It is difficult to evaluate the full extent of the FBI’s interest and interference in Panofsky’s activities on this occasion because reports from this period were not included in the material released to me

⁹⁷⁰ FBI Memo sent by Thomas S. Lovering to Director, FBI, August 13th, 1952. It is unlikely that the FBI found anything incriminating within this mail cover. A list of the letters examined shows that the majority were from art historians and fellow scholars, or from academic institutions, and concerned purely professional matters.

⁹⁷¹ FBI request sent from J. Edgar Hoover, Director, FBI, to Mr Donald L Nicholson, Chief, Division of Security, Office of Security and Consular Affairs, Department of State, Washington, July 17th, 1952.

⁹⁷² Panofsky to Louis Grodecki, March 5th, 1952 (1527).

⁹⁷³ Frank Aydelotte to Ruth Shipley, March 30th, 1954 (1686). Shipley has been described as “A devotee of the ‘better safe than sorry’ approach to free expression, she felt that those who criticised the government (from the left, of course) should not be allowed to leave the country.” D.M. Oshinky, *A Conspiracy So Immense: The World of Joe McCarthy*, 1983, p15.

⁹⁷⁴ Frank Aydelotte to Ruth Shipley, March 30th, 1954 (1686).

⁹⁷⁵ Panofsky wrote to Aydelotte soon after, thanking him for his “magnificent letter.” Panofsky to Aydelotte, April 6th, 1954 (AAA).

under the Freedom of Information/Privacy Acts request. Deletions were made in order to safeguard information obviously considered too sensitive to de-classify, and the caesura lasts from November 1952 until October 1956. It is quite probable that these classified files, covering the period in which the FBI's interest in Oppenheimer would have been at its height, would contain information of some interest to the historian.

At the same time as he was made aware of the FBI investigation, Panofsky also found himself vilified as a dangerous un-American 'Red' in a scurrilous American magazine article. In this innuendo- and rumour-filled piece entitled 'Dr Oppenheimer's Mysterious Institute', Karl Hess cast serious aspersions on the trustworthiness and reliability of Panofsky's place of work.⁹⁷⁶ Describing the IAS as a "scholarly dream house,"⁹⁷⁷ Hess noted that among the members of the IAS Board there was "a weighty emphasis on atomic energy interests and international finance."⁹⁷⁸ These anti-intellectual and vaguely anti-Semitic undercurrents were followed up by Hess's description of the Institute's "secretive scholars", and the IAS was thus branded "a brooding menace up to strange mischiefs."⁹⁷⁹

Spiriting up images of covert operations and threats to American security, Hess described Panofsky's Institute as,

...a veritable sieve through which the world's atomic energy information has poured...As a sieve or funnel also for the most rarefied researches in international finance and various industrially-applicable researches, the Institute has possible meaning of a far more earthy nature than its scribble-filled blackboards and absently wandering inmates would indicate to a casual visitor.⁹⁸⁰

Hess then went through the most notable figures at the Institute one by one, highlighting their suspect credentials and their 'un-American' activity. He resurrected, for example, "Oppenheimer's background of close association with Communists and the Communist Party", and asserted that, "From his home near the Institute, Einstein also managed to lend his name to a veritable assembly line of pro-Communist causes."⁹⁸¹ Frank Aydelotte was then denounced for his war-time "sympathy for the embattled Bolsheviki", and for belonging to "a select group...prominent for their backing of various pro-Communist causes in demanding a truce in Korea."⁹⁸² When Panofsky's turn came the charges were even more pointed. "In the school of historical studies", Hess noted,

⁹⁷⁶ K. Hess, 'Dr Oppenheimer's Mysterious Institute', *American Mercury*, July 1956, pp5-12.

⁹⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, p7.

⁹⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, p11.

⁹⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, p6.

⁹⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, p11-12.

⁹⁸¹ *Ibid.*, p11 & p9.

⁹⁸² *Ibid.*, p7.

...there is Erwin Panofsky, described by J.B. Matthews, former research director of the House Committee on Un-American Activities, as one of the 'top collaborationists' of the Communist front apparatus in academic circles.⁹⁸³

Alerted to the offending article Panofsky denounced the *American Mercury* as a "Nazi paper."⁹⁸⁴ He then joked to close friends that he had always wanted middle initials, and could now sign his name "Erwin T.C. (Top Collaborationist) Panofsky."⁹⁸⁵ However, he must also have been rather alarmed to find himself publicly defamed as a Communist conspirator. Alongside the official FBI investigation, these were surely worrying developments for a Jewish émigré academic.

Panofsky was not, so far as I've been able to ascertain, a Communist – concealed, card-carrying or otherwise. Indeed, I would take at face value Panofsky's own statement,

*"I am not and never was a Marxist, either in the political or in the methodical sense, but only that obsolete animal, an Erasmian or eighteenth-century liberal."*⁹⁸⁶

Most of those interviewed by the FBI considered Panofsky a 'humanitarian' in the most general sense, and many suggested he was either extremely naïve politically or apolitical altogether (or both). As one FBI Agent recorded after interviewing neighbours of the Panofskys in Princeton,

They stated that he [Panofsky] is pleased with his freedom and prosperity in the United States but that he has poor judgement, no practical everyday experience or contacts, does not know what is really going on and has a persecution complex....PANOFSKY has never given any indication whatsoever to the WHEELERS that he is interested in or in sympathy with Communism. They stated that he is probably on 'some mailing lists for liberal causes' and that with his impractical outlook on life probably signs every petition presented to him which appears to be 'humanitarian'.⁹⁸⁷

In the same report the Agent documented how,

Individuals who have known Panofsky well at Princeton, N.J. over the past 10 years described him as a brilliant scholar who has no practical experience or understanding and who is easily led into endorsing almost any humanitarian project without ascertaining who the sponsors may be or the underlying purpose.⁹⁸⁸

A different Agent then noted that another set of neighbours in Princeton had suggested that,

⁹⁸³ Ibid., p8. J.B. Matthews, a former American Communist turned evangelical red-baiter, has been described as, "the *éminence grise* of the anti-Communist network, valued for his commitment and vast collection of left-wing letterheads." Schrecker, *No Ivory Tower*, op. cit., p72.

⁹⁸⁴ Panofsky to Wolfgang Panofsky, July 23rd, 1956 (1977).

⁹⁸⁵ Panofsky to Wolfgang Pauli, July 31st, 1956 (1980).

⁹⁸⁶ Panofsky to Morris Dorsky, Nov. 22nd, 1954 (1725).

⁹⁸⁷ FBI Report made by Thomas Lovering, January 17th, 1952.

⁹⁸⁸ Ibid.

...Panofsky was temperamental, sensitive and impulsive and was often misunderstood but in no way disloyal to the Government of the United States. In fact, according to TEN BROECK, Panofsky had often demonstrated his admiration for the democratic way of life...He said he felt the Subject was rather naive for a man with his experience and that he might have been too easily led to endorsing projects about which he knew next to nothing... He said PANOFSKY had expressed himself on various occasions as being opposed to the use of the Atom Bomb and that probably some individuals had construed this to mean that he was opposed to democracies and in favour of the Communist philosophy. However, according to Dr TEN BROECK the Subject is a loyal American citizen.⁹⁸⁹

Seemingly with a complete lack of irony, the Agent ended this report by noting that Mrs Ten-Broeck described Dora Panofsky as,

...a very emotional sensitive type person who had a personality complex in that 'she feared the FBI might sometime investigate them'.⁹⁹⁰

Though Panofsky's *Defense of the Ivory Tower* may strike the modern reader at first as an entirely ineffectual, apolitical response to a very real political situation, when understood in its historical context this essay can be understood as quite a courageous statement. The vast majority of American academics did very little to stand up to the abuses of freedom associated with the worst excesses of the Cold War, academic or otherwise. Indeed, most were largely acquiescent in the paranoiac conformity. As a Jewish émigré intellectual Panofsky was obviously acutely sensitive to the dangers of making himself at all conspicuous. He recognised that in speaking against the consensus he left himself open to the charge of being 'Un-American'. The émigré scholar certainly worried that he was putting himself in the firing line with his *Ivory Tower* speech and essay. When he first proposed the topic for a conference in Princeton he acknowledged that this "little heretical talk" could be considered quite "subversive".⁹⁹¹ And shortly after he first gave this speech he wrote to Richard Krautheimer, "Amusingly enough, I seem to have gotten away with it."⁹⁹² This was not an essay that Panofsky had published in any mainstream journal.⁹⁹³ Instead, he had numerous carbons of the essay printed and he circulated these widely among friends.⁹⁹⁴ When like-minded colleagues then contacted him with comments such as, "This little essay is most apposite to our present academic crisis; why not assure it of a wider reading group?" Panofsky declined.⁹⁹⁵ He did though,

⁹⁸⁹ FBI Report made by Thomas F. Sullivan, April 4th, 1952.

⁹⁹⁰ Ibid.

⁹⁹¹ Panofsky to Hugh S. Taylor, December 10th, 1952 (AAA).

⁹⁹² Panofsky to Krautheimer, February 25th, 1953 (AAA).

⁹⁹³ The essay was published in *The Centennial Review of Arts and Sciences*, 1:2, spring 1957, pp111-122; and then again in the *American Institute of Architects Journal*, 32, 1959, pp19-32.

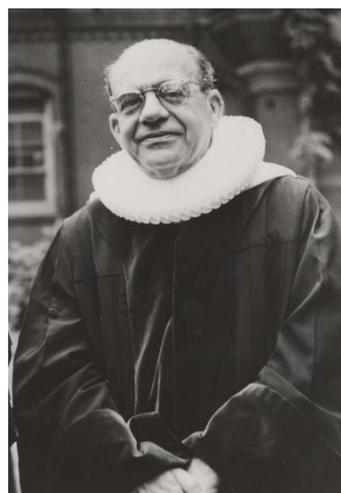
⁹⁹⁴ Panofsky to Herman Salinger, May 15th, 1953 (1612).

⁹⁹⁵ Herman Salinger to Panofsky, May 10th, 1953 (AAA).

deliver his *Defense of the Ivory Tower* as a speech on many different occasions, and at universities and colleges across the East Coast. And this at a time when the McCarthy hysteria and the nationalist furore regarding ‘Un-American activities’ was at its height.

In 1957 Panofsky was invited back to Harvard to receive an honorary doctorate. Asked to provide a speech at this prestigious Harvard Commencement Panofsky elected to speak *In Defense of the Ivory Tower*.⁹⁹⁶ This was the most prominent public airing of Panofsky’s statement on the importance of academic freedom.⁹⁹⁷ The émigré scholar marked this occasion by wearing the academic garb of a Hamburg professor, complete with its rather ostentatious ruff. Mentioning the symbolic intent of this choice to one correspondent, Panofsky explained,

*“It is, in fact, in the Hamburg gown that I now attend such functions as require academic dress...The ruff which belongs to this costume has a most pleasant iconographic significance which I always emphasize when asked about this queer accessory because it does have a kind of message: in Hamburg there are only three categories of people who have the ‘privilege of the ruff’: the Senators, the ministers of the seven principle churches and the full professors in the university. It will be a long time before scholars achieve a similar status in this otherwise agreeable country.”*⁹⁹⁸



8. Panofsky at the Harvard Commencement, 1957.

Just as Kantorowicz had done, Panofsky was keen to emphasise the difference between the conceptions of ‘scholarship’ and academia in Germany and America.

Ultimately, Panofsky was quite encouraged by the response to his “little heretical talk”. His fellow émigré scholars certainly appreciated the statement, and Panofsky for having written it. Returning one of Panofsky’s carbon copies, Krautheimer informed his friend,

*“I have read it time and again and enjoyed it more every time I would read it. It is hard for me to let the child return to its father, but here it goes, enclosed in this letter. Many thanks not only for lending it to me but for writing it and saying exactly the things which I sometimes would like to say but just cannot do as well.”*⁹⁹⁹

⁹⁹⁶ For an evocative description of the day’s events, see ‘A Mixture of Ceremonial and Informality’ *Harvard Alumni Bulletin*, 59:17, December 14th, 1957, pp257-259.

⁹⁹⁷ Though McCarthy had been widely discredited by the end of 1954 it should be pointed out that as late as 1959 two academics were imprisoned for their conduct at HUAC hearings in 1954, when they had used the First Amendment to avoid answering questions regarding their links to the Communist Party.

⁹⁹⁸ Panofsky to Hans Kauffmann, January 6th, 1958 (2155).

⁹⁹⁹ Krautheimer to Panofsky, February 18th, 1953 (AAA).

Panofsky's émigré colleagues obviously understood and valued the statement. However, it was the response from American scholars that Panofsky found most gratifying. After hearing Panofsky speak *In Defense of the Ivory Tower* at Johns Hopkins in 1956, George Boas wrote to tell him how disappointed he was that his University was not going to have the statement published. As Boas informed Panofsky, "Hopkins should have had it. But I'm glad it is to be printed somewhere for it is a delightful and, what is more, important piece of work."¹⁰⁰⁰ Panofsky seems to have been particularly gratified by the reception his speech received at the Harvard Commencement. In his personal files the émigré scholar preserved a clipping of a newspaper report of the day's events in which special mention was made of his own contribution. According to the American journalist,

[Panofsky's] address at the Commencement showed that an art historian can be aware of more than art. 'In Defense of the Ivory Tower', aside from being a superbly researched and written speech, outlined a philosophy that was more than just an apologia for intellectuals. He described the 'social responsibility' which revolves on the tower dweller who from his particular vantage point can see the danger and then has the duty 'to yell, on the slim chance of being heard, to those on the ground.' Panofsky has done his share of yelling.¹⁰⁰¹

Panofsky took great solace from such acknowledgement. As he wrote to Otto Pächt, not long after the Harvard Commencement,

*"That you agree with my little speech on the ivory tower is a source of great joy to me. As chance would have it, I had to repeat this little speech a few days ago before an audience of more than eight thousand people (a rather terrifying experience which I never had before); but apparently everything went quite well, and I was particularly glad to have a quite favourable, even enthusiastic response precisely from persons I had not expected to share our old-fashioned humanistic point of view, including bankers, engineers and experimental physicists. Quite apart from the personal gratification, this response made me quite hopeful as to the foreseeable future."*¹⁰⁰²

Somewhat conversely then, even though the onset of the Cold War prompted a period of anxiety and concern for Panofsky, it was also the period in which he became more confident of his position and sense of place in the United States. Panofsky well acknowledged that he was in the minority and could be targeted for holding 'humanistic' views. However he also found himself in good company

¹⁰⁰⁰ George Boas to Panofsky, May 22nd, 1956 (AAA).

¹⁰⁰¹ A.F. Friendly, Jr., 'A Universal Man', *The Harvard Crimson*, Thursday November 6th, 1958.

¹⁰⁰² Panofsky to Otto Pächt, June 20th, 1957 (2111). Writing to Jan van Gelder of "the shortcomings of the U.S., "particularly with respect to politics", Panofsky felt compelled to add, "...although things seem to improve somewhat, and my own experience at Harvard, where I gave a pretty 'subversive' talk to about 10,000 alumni and the 'high brass' of the University, was quite encouraging." Panofsky to Jan van Gelder, July 18th, 1957 (2115).

alongside fellow tower-dwellers such as Oppenheimer, Einstein and Kantorowicz, and in that tradition of thinkers he had acknowledged in his speech: Socrates, Erasmus, and the Göttingen seven. As an émigré humanist Panofsky had felt obligated to formulate a response to an American academic crisis. However, he did so as a committed citizen of the United States, an individual implicated in an *American* struggle. Ultimately Panofsky was able to provide for his American colleagues a historical context and lineage for the liberal traditions of humanistic scholarship when these traditions came under threat. Accordingly, the more open-minded American academics looked to figures such as Panofsky and Kantorowicz as standard-bearers, and admired them for having the courage and the wherewithal to speak out. Émigré 'humanists' like Panofsky seemed to proffer a tangible, living link to the principles and traditions of enlightenment scholarship, and it was in this context that Panofsky became assured of his acceptance and his role in America.

5. Evaluation

Three Decades of Art History in the United States: Impressions of a Transplanted European (1953)¹⁰⁰³

In the 1950s Panofsky became more assured of his role and of his acceptance within American academia. He continued to earn academic recognition in the form of honorary doctorates from various American universities,¹⁰⁰⁴ and he was also offered a permanent professorship at Harvard, the site of his successful Norton Lectures.¹⁰⁰⁵ The émigré scholar had even reached the point where he was being asked to provide references for American scholars such as Richard Offner, Charles Rufus Morey and Walter W.S. Cook; men who had helped facilitate his first work experiences in America. The offer of the Eastman Professorship at the University of Oxford in 1955 also indicates Panofsky's reputation on the international stage.¹⁰⁰⁶

In 1952 Panofsky was asked by an American scholar, W. Rex Crawford, to contribute to a symposium documenting the experiences of émigré academics' in the United States. Crawford hoped these Lectures would illustrate for an American audience, "how we have been changed by our friends from European universities and how they themselves have changed in the process."¹⁰⁰⁷ In his letter of invitation Crawford informed Panofsky,

*"I hope you will not hesitate to emphasize the European contribution even though it may seem to you in your modesty to be a bit self-centred. We certainly have no desire to demand flattery of approaches and accomplishments here in the United States. Indeed, we had given some consideration to a sub-title for the series such as Europe's Gift to America."*¹⁰⁰⁸

Panofsky had declined a similar entreaty from Ed Murrow in the 1930s. But by 1952, almost exactly twenty years since he had first crossed the Atlantic, the émigré scholar felt comfortable enough to

¹⁰⁰³ When originally published this essay bore the simple title, 'The History of Art'. See below. When republished in the *College Art Journal* the essay was retitled: *Three Decades of Art History in the United States: Impressions of a Transplanted European*. See note 1068.

¹⁰⁰⁴ In the 1950s Panofsky received honorary doctorates from Oberlin (1950), Rutgers University (1954), Bard College (1956) and Harvard University (1957).

¹⁰⁰⁵ Panofsky was offered the Carl M. Loeb Professorship at Harvard in 1956. He turned down this enticing offer because he felt a debt of obligation to the IAS. Panofsky also considered himself too old by that point to take on such a responsibility. See Panofsky to Nathan M. Pusey, December 18th, 1956 (2019), & January 2nd, 1957 (2024). For Panofsky's deliberations on "the only really hard decision in my whole life", see also, Panofsky to Millard Meiss, January 2nd, 1957 (2023), and Panofsky to Jakob Rosenberg, January 3rd, 1957 (2025).

¹⁰⁰⁶ Frank Aydelotte to Panofsky, March 5th, 1955 (AAA).

¹⁰⁰⁷ W.R. Crawford, 'Introduction' to *The Cultural Migration*, op. cit., p2.

¹⁰⁰⁸ W.R. Crawford to Panofsky, February 6th, 1952 (AAA).

accede to Crawford's request. Panofsky obviously had things to say, and he was now convinced that he could, and perhaps even *should*, give public voice to his criticisms of the American academic and scholarly environment. Nevertheless, he remained very much alert to the sensitive nature of what he had been asked to do; as did some of his the other émigrés approached by Crawford. As the French linguist and literary scholar Henri Peyre told Panofsky,

*"I was surprised by my own imprudence in having rashly and readily accepted to take part in the series of lectures on the Cultural Migration...(T)he thing embarrasses me not a little."*¹⁰⁰⁹

Peyre was particularly worried about how to 'pitch' his presentation. Although he was sure that, "The Americans are so broad-minded that they will welcome some gentle chiding from us more than flattery,"¹⁰¹⁰ he was anxious to learn how his fellow speakers intended to tackle the undertaking. Panofsky, for his part, informed Peyre,

*"I, too, realize too late what we have let ourselves in for and share all your misgivings. Yet since we have accepted, I am afraid we have to stick to it...I personally have resolved to be perfectly frank in pointing out what I consider as harmful and also in recognising what I consider to be praiseworthy...But the task is really extremely difficult. Both you and I will do our best to be tactful, but it is quite clear that we are bound to arouse some opposition."*¹⁰¹¹

Conscious that the lectures were to be published, Panofsky gave his own presentation a great deal of thought, and he expended no-little effort on its composition. In many ways the resultant essay illustrates in microcosm Panofsky's approach to his American acculturation.

At the beginning of his essay Panofsky made a concerted effort to ingratiate himself with his American audience. Keen to play down his own refugee status Panofsky emphasised that he had first been *invited* to America as *guest*, long before the National Socialists had assumed power in Germany.¹⁰¹² Indeed, as has been pointed out, he even somewhat overstated the extent of his early experiences in the United States.¹⁰¹³ Panofsky also played down the tumultuous events that forced him to seek permanent refuge in America. As he blithely informed his American audience,

¹⁰⁰⁹ H.M. Peyre to Panofsky, February 1st, 1952 (AAA). Peyre's contribution was entitled, 'The Study of Literature', *The Cultural Migration*, op. cit., pp27-81.

¹⁰¹⁰ Ibid.

¹⁰¹¹ Panofsky to H.M. Peyre, February 4th, 1952 (AAA).

¹⁰¹² As Panofsky wrote, "I first came to this country in the fall of 1931 upon the invitation of New York University." *The History of Art*, op. cit., p82. On the next page he reiterates the point: "In contrast to so many immigrant scholars, I had the good fortune of coming to the United States as a guest rather than a refugee." p83.

¹⁰¹³ See p.77, note 333.

When the Nazis ousted all Jewish officials in the spring of 1933, I happened to be in New York...I fondly remember the receipt of a long cable in German, informing me of my dismissal but sealed with a strip of green paper which bore the inscription: 'Cordial Easter Greetings, Western Union'. These greetings proved to be a good omen.¹⁰¹⁴

Panofsky was obviously determined to engender the impression that his own move to America was an entirely propitious event. To emphasise the easiness of his transition, from temporary guest to permanent émigré, he even added, rather disingenuously, "be it said with the deepest gratitude, no one has ever made me feel the difference when my status suddenly changed in 1933."¹⁰¹⁵

Moving on to discuss the history of art, Panofsky was obviously keen to avoid anything that might smack of that "proverbial European conceit". He thus quoted, tactfully, an unnamed "American scholar" who had opined of the discipline of art history that "its native tongue was German."¹⁰¹⁶ Agreeing that it was indeed "in the German countries that (the history of art) was first recognised as a fully-fledged *Fach*"¹⁰¹⁷ Panofsky reassured his American audience nonetheless,

In emphasising these facts I feel myself free from what may be suspected as retroactive patriotism. I am aware of the dangers inherent in what has been decried as 'Teutonic' methods in the history of art and of the fact that the results of the early, perhaps too early, institutionalisation of the discipline were not always desirable.¹⁰¹⁸

Following this somewhat over-determined introduction Panofsky provided a munificent tribute to the traditions of art scholarship he had encountered during his earliest visits to America. He pointed out that during the interwar period American art history had really come into its own. Indeed, Panofsky went so far as to claim that, "(A)fter the First World War...(America) began to challenge the supremacy, not only of the German-speaking countries, but of Europe as a whole."¹⁰¹⁹ Praising the "distinctive physiognomy"¹⁰²⁰ of this 'American' art history, Panofsky pointed to the "remarkable studies of a technical nature" carried out at many American universities, most especially Harvard;¹⁰²¹ and he also made special mention of the "fastidious scholarship in early Christian, Byzantine and medieval art" that took place at Princeton University.¹⁰²² The émigré scholar also pointed out that, despite America's distance from Europe, huge philanthropic investment meant that "certain aspects

¹⁰¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p82.

¹⁰¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p83.

¹⁰¹⁶ *Ibid.* p84.

¹⁰¹⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁰¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p84-5.

¹⁰¹⁹ *Ibid.*, p85-6.

¹⁰²⁰ *Ibid.*, p88.

¹⁰²¹ *Ibid.*, p87.

¹⁰²² *Ibid.*, p88.

of medieval painting and book illumination could be more exhaustively studied in this country than in Europe.”¹⁰²³ And, noting how America’s geographical distance allowed for a certain ‘objectivity’ when it came to understanding European art, Panofsky expressed admiration for the fact that (in comparison to their European counterparts) “American art historians were able to see the past in a perspective picture undistorted by national and regional bias.”¹⁰²⁴ Panofsky went on to name Richard Offner, Charles Rufus Morey, Walter W.S. Cook, Paul Sachs, Alfred Barr, Arthur Kingsley Porter, and William Ivins among the most important figures of this “Golden Age” of American art scholarship.¹⁰²⁵ He also described Millard Meiss, Rens Lee and Meyer Schapiro as the most brilliant representatives of the next generation of American art historians.¹⁰²⁶ Once again, this was a shrewd manoeuvre. By name-dropping these American scholars, each one of whom Panofsky had known personally since the early 30s, he was, in effect, implicating himself in his account of this early, foundational period of *American* art history. Establishing his long-standing association with the earliest history of the discipline on American shores Panofsky was, in effect, rubbing the edges of his ‘émigré, ‘foreigner’ status.

It was at the height of this “Golden Age” of American art history, Panofsky then noted, that German art historians started to arrive in the country *en masse*.¹⁰²⁷ It is quite telling though, that he makes pithy and succinct mention of the émigré impact. Panofsky did assert that the influx of European art scholars had “unquestionably contributed to the further growth of the history of art as an academic discipline as well as an object of public interest”¹⁰²⁸; and he mentioned the “spectacular” development of NYU’s Institute of Fine Arts as a particularly relevant example.¹⁰²⁹ However, contrary to what he had been specifically asked to do by Crawford, he did not “emphasise the European contribution” at all. Instead, Panofsky quickly turned to the benefits that the émigrés had themselves accrued from migration.

It was beneficial, Panofsky claimed, for the émigrés to be,

...immediately and permanently exposed to an art history without provincial limitations in time and space, and to take part in the development of a discipline still animated by a spirit of youthful adventurousness.¹⁰³⁰

¹⁰²³ *Ibid.*, p89. Such collections had made it possible for Panofsky to write *Early Netherlandish Painting in America*.

¹⁰²⁴ *Ibid.*, p90-1.

¹⁰²⁵ *Ibid.*, p86-8.

¹⁰²⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁰²⁷ *Ibid.*, p88.

¹⁰²⁸ *Ibid.*, p93.

¹⁰²⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰³⁰ *Ibid.*, p91.

He also pointed out that the use of English had been an unequivocally positive consequence of migration. As Panofsky reported it,

[T]he vocabulary of art historical writing became more complex and elaborate in the German-speaking countries than anywhere else and finally developed into a technical language which...was hard to penetrate. There are more words in our philosophy than are dreamt of in heaven and earth, and every German-educated art historian endeavouring to make himself understood in English had to make up his own dictionary. In doing so he realised that his native terminology was often either unnecessarily recondite or downright imprecise; the German language unfortunately permits a fairly trivial thought to declaim from behind a woolen curtain of apparent profundity and, conversely, a multitude of meanings to lurk behind one term...(W)hen speaking or writing English, even an art historian must more or less know what he means and mean what he says, and this compulsion was exceedingly wholesome for all of us.¹⁰³¹

Obviously speaking from personal experience, Panofsky then indicated how the American predilection for public lectures also encouraged the émigrés to produce a more straightforward, digestible style of scholarship:

[T]he fact that the American professor is much more frequently called upon to face a nonprofessional and unfamiliar audience than is his European confrere, went a long way to loosen our tongues...Forced to express ourselves both understandably and precisely...we suddenly found the courage to write books on whole masters or whole periods instead of – or besides – writing a dozen specialised articles.¹⁰³²

Panofsky wanted to engender the impression that the migration had been a smooth and auspicious development, and he even referred to “the providential synchronism between the rise of Fascism and the spontaneous efflorescence of the history of art in the United States.”¹⁰³³ Panofsky also worked hard to convey the idea that the émigrés received an entirely hospitable and amenable reception, and that they simply fitted in where needed. After quoting Walter Cook’s now-famous aphorism, “Hitler is my best friend...he shakes the tree and I collect the apples”, Panofsky asserted,

No foreign art historian has, to the best of my knowledge, ever displaced an American-born. The immigrants were either added to the staffs of college or university departments already in being...or were entrusted with the task of instituting the teaching of the history of art where it had previously been absent

¹⁰³¹ *Ibid.*, p92

¹⁰³² *Ibid.*, p92-3.

¹⁰³³ *Ibid.*, p95.

from the scene. In either case the opportunities of American students and teachers were widened rather than narrowed.¹⁰³⁴

Of course, an acquaintance with Panofsky's private letters shows that he was being somewhat 'constructive' with the truth here. The intellectual and professional acculturation was much more complex and involved than Panofsky's retelling suggests. But even in 1952 he did not think it prudent, nor appropriate, to highlight in either a public lecture or a published essay the many obstacles and challenges that he and his fellow émigré art historians had faced.

Reading these opening sections it is, perhaps, unsurprising that Panofsky's autobiographical account is most often construed as an unremittingly rose-tinted account of his American experiences.¹⁰³⁵ However, such interpretations fail to address the historical context in which Panofsky wrote this essay, and, as such, they do little to question or challenge the myth that the process of acculturation was entirely straightforward and propitious.¹⁰³⁶ It is quite understandable that Panofsky would choose to iron out of his biographical account many of the difficulties he and his fellow émigrés had faced in the United States. Ultimately, the country had provided refuge from horrific persecution, and Panofsky, and many others like him, were grateful for the opportunities they had been afforded. By the time Panofsky penned his autobiographical account, most émigré art historians (at least those who continued to live in America) *had* proven able to adapt, to fit in and establish themselves.

Moreover, to interpret Panofsky's contribution to Crawford's symposium as entirely 'rose-tinted' is to fail to appreciate this presentation in its entirety. Panofsky's magnanimous account of American art history and the American reception afforded the émigrés comprises less than half of this essay; it is merely the opening gambit in what was actually a quite measured and critical evaluation of his experience of acculturation.

Having ingratiated himself with his audience Panofsky goes on to address some of the more significant contentions he had with the American scholarly environment. After indicating the conflict he had experienced with an Anglo-Saxon positivism "which is, in principle, distrustful of abstract speculation,"¹⁰³⁷ Panofsky turned his attention to what he described as "organisational questions."¹⁰³⁸ As Panofsky noted, these "organisational questions" transcended the history of art and applied, "*mutatis mutandis*, to all other branches of the humanities."¹⁰³⁹ These would be the same issues Panofsky had addressed in his communication with the John Hay Whitney Foundation.

¹⁰³⁴ *Ibid.*, p93.

¹⁰³⁵ See p17, n. 77.

¹⁰³⁶ Joan Hart (*ibid*) does offer a more critical evaluation of Panofsky's overall experience of migration.

¹⁰³⁷ *The History of Art*, p91.

¹⁰³⁸ *Ibid.*, p95.

¹⁰³⁹ *Ibid.*

However, at Crawford's symposium, and in the resultant publication, Panofsky's gave these concerns full public expression for the first time.

Panofsky began his critique by pointing out that the American university student was almost entirely dependent upon their teacher for organisation and guidance. This he contrasted with the university as he had known it in Germany:

The European student, unsupervised except for such assistance and criticism as he receives in seminars and personal conversation, is expected to learn what he wants and can, the responsibility for failure or success resting exclusively with himself. The American student, tested and graded without cease, is expected to learn what he must, the responsibility for failure or success resting largely with his instructors (hence the recurrent discussions in our campus papers as to how seriously the members of the teaching staff violate their duties when spending time on research).¹⁰⁴⁰

Echoing the concerns of Leo Spitzer, Panofsky pointed out that the American university, for all its positive features, was ill-formed to develop properly independent and critical scholars:

There is [within the American University], by and large, any amount of good will on both sides; kindness and helpful solicitude on the part of the teacher and – I speak from happiest experience – loyalty and responsiveness on the part of the student. But within the framework of our system just these engaging qualities seem to make the transformation from student into scholar so much the harder.¹⁰⁴¹

Panofsky believed that the American university did not foster or *cultivate* those habits of self-responsibility and critical reflection that he considered the basis of good 'humanistic' scholarship. In thus criticising the American educational system Panofsky gave categorical definition to the educative ideal of *Bildung*:

The most basic problem I have observed or encountered in our academic life is how to achieve an organic transition from the attitude of the student who feels: "You are paid for educating me; now, damn you, educate me," to that of the young scholar who feels: "You are supposed to know how to solve a problem; now, please, show me how to do it"; and on the part of the instructor, from the attitude of the taskmaster who devises and grades test papers producing the officially required percentage of failures, passes, and honors, to that of the gardener who tries to make a tree grow.¹⁰⁴²

¹⁰⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, p102.

¹⁰⁴¹ *Ibid.*, p103.

¹⁰⁴² *Ibid.*, p102-3.

It was within the “graduate school” that the American student was expected to learn how to *be* a scholar. However, Panofsky pointed out that the average graduate student, in addition to being expected to complete their doctorate, was almost immediately overburdened with an excessive “teaching load” – and the weighty administration that went with it – which meant they had little time or opportunity for sustained periods of individual, speculative research. This, Panofsky suggested, hampered their development as scholars:

[N]ever during his formative years has [the American graduate student] had the chance to fool around, so to speak. Yet it is precisely this chance which makes the humanist. Humanists cannot be trained; they must be allowed to mature or, if I may use so homely a simile, to marinate. It is not the reading matter assigned for Course 301 but a line of Erasmus of Rotterdam, or Spenser, or Dante, or some obscure mythographer of the fourteenth century, which will ‘light our candle’; and it is mostly where we have no business to seek that we shall find. ‘Liber non est’, says a delightful Latin proverb, ‘qui non aliquando nihil agit’: ‘He is not free who does not do nothing once in a while.’¹⁰⁴³

Panofsky then made an explicit comparison with the German *Habilitation* system; wherein the university graduate, having received his doctorate, was not allowed to teach “before at least two or three years have passed and he has produced a solid piece of work.”¹⁰⁴⁴ This sustained period of research and study provided the trainee-scholar with the opportunity to properly “marinate”, and upon receiving the *venia legendi*, he was then “at liberty to teach as much or as little as he sees fit.”¹⁰⁴⁵

In this critical appraisal of the American University Panofsky also pointed out that the widespread teaching of ‘general’ courses meant that the trainee (and even the established) scholar was most often denied “that balance of teaching and research which is perhaps the finest thing in academic life.”¹⁰⁴⁶ The combination of research and teaching was considered hugely significant by Panofsky in terms of the student’s development of a properly responsible and ‘critical’ attitude. Learning from the active example of their teacher, from that “joyful and instructive experience which comes from a common venture into the unexplored,”¹⁰⁴⁷ the university student would be given an insight into the realities and exigencies of individual scholarship. “In German universities,” Panofsky pointed out, making explicit the contrast with the American system,

¹⁰⁴³ *Ibid.*, p106.

¹⁰⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, p105.

¹⁰⁴⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁴⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁴⁷ *Ibid.*

the professors lecture on whichever subject fascinates them at the time, thereby sharing with their students the pleasures of discovery; and if a young man happens to be interested in a special field in which no courses are available at one university, he can, and will, go to another...(T)he aim of the academic process is to impart to the student, not a maximum of knowledge but a maximum of adaptability – not so much to teach him subject matter as to teach him method.¹⁰⁴⁸

Once again, the émigré scholar used his own experience of (and belief in) the *Bildung* model of education as the basis for his critique of the American system.

Panofsky then turned his attention to what he had long considered the fundamental problem in America:

Nothing short of a miracle can reach what I consider the root of our troubles, the lack of adequate preparation at the high school stage. Our public high schools...dismiss the future humanist with deficiencies which in many cases can never be completely cured and can be relieved only at the expense of more time and energy than can reasonably be spared in college and graduate school.¹⁰⁴⁹

This time on a very public platform, Panofsky once again proffered the model of the German *Gymnasium* as a means to encourage ‘humanistic’ development. In contrast to the elective system predominant in America, Panofsky asserted that all young students should receive the kind of intensive and wide-ranging education that was *de rigueur* at the *Gymnasium*. In defence of this view he pointed out,

I have still to meet the humanist who regrets that he had to learn some mathematics and physics in the high school days. Conversely, Robert Bunsen, one of the greatest scientists in history, is on record with the statement that a boy who is taught nothing but mathematics will not become a mathematician but an ass, and that the most effective education of the youthful mind is a course in Latin grammar.¹⁰⁵⁰

Panofsky believed that it was at high school level that the young adult was most susceptible to the influence of real scholarship and he suggested it was at this stage that the student should be first introduced to, “that elusive spirit of scholarship...that queer religion which makes its votaries restless and serene, enthusiastic and pedantic, scrupulously honest and not a little vain.”¹⁰⁵¹ In withering tones, Panofsky pointed out how

¹⁰⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, p104.

¹⁰⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, p107.

¹⁰⁵⁰ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁵¹ *Ibid.*, p108.

The American theory of education requires that the teachers of the young...know a great deal about 'behaviour patterns', 'group integration', and 'controlled aggression drives', but does not insist too much upon what they may or may not know of their subject, and cares even less for whether they are genuinely interested or actively engaged in it.¹⁰⁵²

As a direct contrast Panofsky provided a long, evocative description of his own experience at the *Gymnasium*:

The typical German 'Gymnasial-professor' is...a man of many shortcomings, now pompous, now shy, often neglectful of his appearance, and blissfully unaware of juvenile psychology. But though he was content to teach young boys rather than university students, he was nearly always a scholar. The man who taught me Latin was a friend of Theodor Mommsen and one of the most respected Cicero specialists. The man who taught me Greek was the editor of the 'Berliner Philologische Wochenschrift', and I shall never forget the impression which this lovable pedant made on us boys of fifteen when he apologised for having overlooked the misplacement of a comma in a Plato passage. 'It was my error,' he said, 'and yet I have written an article on this very comma twenty years ago; now we must do the translation over again.' Nor shall I forget his antipode, a man of Erasmian wit and erudition, who became our history teacher when we had reached the stage of 'high school juniors' and introduced himself with the words: 'Gentlemen this year we shall try to understand the so-called Middle Ages. Facts will be presupposed; you are old enough to use books.'¹⁰⁵³

Once again, Panofsky was giving expression to those *Bildung* principles that Humboldt had enshrined within the German school system. The *Gymnasium* teacher was expected to lead the student through a detailed and intensive engagement with the primary documents of western civilisation. The student would thus experience for themselves the qualities and values contained therein. And, through the formative influence of individual scholarly example, the *Gymnasium* student would develop their own sense of intellectual independence. As Panofsky pointed out,

It is the sum total of little experiences like these which makes for an education. This education should begin as early as possible, when minds are more retentive than ever after. And what is true of method is also true, I think, of subject matter. I do not believe that children and boys should be taught only that which they can fully understand. It is, on the contrary, the half-digested phrase, the half-placed proper name, the half-understood verse, remembered for sound and rhythm rather than meaning, which persists in the memory, captures the imagination, and suddenly emerges, thirty or forty years later, when one encounters a picture based on Ovid's

¹⁰⁵² *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁵³ *Ibid.*

‘Fasti’ or a print exhibiting a motif suggested by the ‘Iliad’ – much as a saturated solution of hyposulphite suddenly crystallises when stirred.¹⁰⁵⁴

Panofsky well recognised that his suggestions would be considered much too idealistic and elitist to ever take widespread root in America; and he did cede that,

No sensible person would propose to change a system which has developed for good historical and economic reasons and could not be altered without a basic revision of American ideas and ideals.¹⁰⁵⁵

However he remained quite serious in his conviction that the American system of education was not conducive to the production of humanist scholars. As such, he recommended once more that,

If one of our great foundations were seriously interested in doing something for the humanities it might establish, ‘*experimenti causa*’, a number of model high schools sufficiently endowed with money and prestige to attract teaching faculties of the same calibre as those of a good college or university, and students prepared to submit to a program of study which our progressive educators would consider exorbitant as well as unprofitable.¹⁰⁵⁶

The revival of this recommendation indicates Panofsky’s dissatisfaction with the way the Whitney Foundation had (or had not) reacted to his original proposals. It also shows that he continued to harbour grave concerns in regards the development of ‘humanists’ in America and, by consequence, the continuation of ‘the humanist tradition.’

Panofsky finished his autobiographical reflections by addressing the impact of the Cold War upon American society and American academia. As an émigré, all too alarmed by these anti-humanistic trends, Panofsky wrote,

There is only one point which it would be disingenuous not to touch upon, though it may seem indelicate to do so: the terrifying rise of precisely those forces which drove us out of Europe in the 1930’s: nationalism and intolerance.¹⁰⁵⁷

Though Panofsky professed himself encouraged that “by and large, the American university teachers seem to wrestle against the powers of darkness instead of ministering to them”¹⁰⁵⁸, he also felt duty-bound to draw attention to the anti-liberal trends permeating American society in 1953:

We cannot blind ourselves to the fact that Americans may now be legally punished, not for what they do or have done, but for what they say or have said, think or have

¹⁰⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, p108-9.

¹⁰⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, p98.

¹⁰⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, p109.

¹⁰⁵⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, p110.

thought. And though the means of punishment are not the same as those employed by the Inquisition, they are uncomfortably similar: economic instead of physical strangulation, and the pillory instead of the stake.¹⁰⁵⁹

Even more directly than he had done in his *Defense of the Ivory Tower*, Panofsky then addressed the threats to academic freedom that had become manifest in America:

Once dissent is equated with heresy, the foundations of the apparently harmless and uncontroversial humanities are no less seriously threatened than those of the natural and social sciences. There is but one step from persecuting the biologist who holds unorthodox views of heredity or the economist who doubts the divine nature of the free enterprise system, to persecuting the museum director who exhibits pictures deviating from the standards of Congressman Dondero or the art historian who fails to pronounce the name of Rembrandt Peale with the same reverence as that of Rembrandt van Rijn.¹⁰⁶⁰

Panofsky ended his essay with an unequivocal refutation of the then-current vogue for loyalty oaths within the academic sphere:

The academic teacher must have the confidence of his students. They must be sure that, in his professional capacity, he will not say anything which to the best of his belief he cannot answer for, nor leave anything unsaid which to the best of his belief he ought to say. A teacher who, as a private individual, has permitted himself to be frightened into signing a statement repugnant to his moral sense and his intellect, or, even worse, into remaining silent where he knows he ought to have spoken, feels in his heart that he has forfeited the right to demand that confidence. He faces his students with a clouded conscience, and a man with a clouded conscience is like a man diseased.¹⁰⁶¹

For Panofsky, it was the academic's responsibility to exercise their own critical judgement, independently and freely. Any impingement upon this autonomy of thought and of conscience was considered a direct challenge to the very *raison d'être* of the scholar.

Considered in its entirety, Panofsky's contribution to Crawford's symposium on *The Cultural Migration* was not simply a rose-tinted homage to his adopted country. It also offered a considered critique of the American scholarly and intellectual environment. This biographical reflection constituted a summa of Panofsky's 'humanistic' principles, formulated in direct response to his experiences in America. Understood in this context, the essay was, like Panofsky's *Defense of the*

¹⁰⁵⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰⁶⁰ Ibid. George Anthony Dondero was a supporter of McCarthy who, the year before Panofsky's essay, made a speech in Congress declaring that modern art was a Russian-inspired conspiracy designed to spread Communism in America. He received widespread commendation for these views. See R. Hofstadter, *Anti-Intellectualism in American Life*, 1963, p14-15.

¹⁰⁶¹ Ibid., p110-11.

Ivory Tower, a quite courageous statement made by an émigré scholar at the height of the McCarthy period.

As indicated in his letter to Henri Peyre, Panofsky was anxious about the reception that would be afforded his speech and the resultant essay. However, as with all of Panofsky's American publications, this was a carefully composed piece of writing. Panofsky expressed quite definite and significant criticisms of the American environment, but he took great care as to how these were presented. He was overtly conscious that by acceding to Crawford's invitation he was, in many respects, reinforcing his 'outsider' status, and so he made great effort to demonstrate his knowledge of and appreciation for 'American' traditions. Panofsky was, of course, an American citizen by this point and he emphasised this throughout his essay, pointedly referring to American universities and American traditions as "our" and "ours".¹⁰⁶²

So measured and composed was Panofsky's essay that it struck a chord with most academics who read it. Panofsky's fellow émigrés certainly identified with the points he had made. Trude Krautheimer-Hess, for example, wrote to tell him,

*"I am in favour of making it required reading for all American college presidents and chairmen of departments...I don't think anyone has ever said this so clearly...and I only hope it will be as widely known as its importance deserves."*¹⁰⁶³

But many American colleagues also appreciated Panofsky's judicious appraisal, and one would imagine that it was this reaction Panofsky found most gratifying. The Harvard librarian Phil Hofer, for example, told Panofsky, "So often America is either 'knocked down' or flattered greatly...Yours is a very thoughtful – I felt true – presentation."¹⁰⁶⁴ Similarly, Henry-Russell Hitchcock, an American architectural historian name-checked by Panofsky in his essay, wrote, "How good you are to me and to everyone, and yet you are so just that one must believe the kinds of things you say."¹⁰⁶⁵ Panofsky would have been gratified too, that his essay was acknowledged by American scholars to have an importance beyond just the confines of his own discipline. The American historian Henry Commager, wrote for example,

*"I want to tell you how wholly admirable I think your essay on Art History – which is really an essay on education. It is worth a wilderness of more formal books and essays on that subject."*¹⁰⁶⁶

¹⁰⁶² See, for example, *Ibid.*, p98 & p100.

¹⁰⁶³ Trude Krautheimer-Hess to Panofsky, April 12th, 1953 (1593).

¹⁰⁶⁴ Phil Hofer to Panofsky, January 23rd, 1954 (AAA).

¹⁰⁶⁵ Henry-Russell Hitchcock to Panofsky, April 15th, 1953 (AAA).

¹⁰⁶⁶ Henry Commager to Panofsky, January 1st, 1956 (1891a).

Similarly, the Princeton art historian John Rupert Martin declared that Panofsky's essay was "full of wisdom and should be read not only by art historians but by everyone who is concerned about the plight of American education."¹⁰⁶⁷ The émigré scholar would surely have appreciated the fact that his apology for humanistic scholarship and traditions had found a receptive audience.

Many academics, émigré and American-born, particularly appreciated Panofsky's courage and eloquence in condemning the illiberalism then menacing American academia. Panofsky had spoken out when many others remained silent and in so doing he provided a salient point of reference for those who struggled against the widespread conformity. As Panofsky's friend, the fellow émigré art historian Rudolph Wittkower, told him, "I very much admired the end of your paper...I wish more people had your courage. But I am sure that your attitude has repercussions in academic circles."¹⁰⁶⁸ George Boas echoed these sentiments, writing,

*"I have never read anything of yours without a warmer feeling in my heart and the thought that I am not alone in the world...Your ending was particularly heart-warming and I particularly appreciated it since it sometimes seems to me that I am fighting single-handed against this horrible menace of authoritarianism."*¹⁰⁶⁹

Morris Dorsky, an American art scholar, spoke for many of his colleagues when he told Panofsky,

*"You will I hope receive many letters from teachers of art history who have come to see you not only as the foremost living art historian, but perhaps even more so importantly for our time, as one of the very few courageous scholars, men of principle, openly voicing their concern about the present academic situation...In our bitter evil trying period we can derive support for a much needed courage from actions and statements such as yours."*¹⁰⁷⁰

As with his *Defense of the Ivory Tower*, the reception afforded this essay on the American intellectual and academic environment went a long way to cement for Panofsky his role and his sense of place in the United States of America.

Meaning in the Visual Arts: Papers In and On Art History (1955)

Emboldened by the response afforded his contribution to Crawford's symposium, Panofsky had this essay reissued the next year. Unlike with *Ivory Tower* though, Panofsky assured this particular statement a much wider audience, publishing it in the *College Art Journal*, unchanged except for the

¹⁰⁶⁷ J.R. Martin, 'Meaning in the Visual Arts' (book review), *The Art Bulletin*, 40:2, June 1958, p159.

¹⁰⁶⁸ Rudolph Wittkower to Panofsky, January 17th, 1955 (AAA).

¹⁰⁶⁹ George Boas to Panofsky, April 7th, 1953 (1587).

¹⁰⁷⁰ Morris Dorsky to Panofsky, November 18th, 1954 (AAA).

more evocative title, *Three Decades of Art History in the United States: Impressions of a Transplanted European*.¹⁰⁷¹

So important did Panofsky consider this essay that he then had it republished a third time, the very next year, this time as the 'Epilogue' to his *Meaning in the Visual Arts: Papers in and on Art History*.¹⁰⁷² This 1955 publication was really a collection of essays which had all seen the light of day in previous publications. Panofsky would often refer to *Meaning in the Visual Arts* as his "drugstore book"¹⁰⁷³ and this self-deprecating description indicates that he fully intended this book to be 'popular', commercial even. Indeed, Panofsky described *Meaning in the Visual Arts* to one correspondent as,

"...a tiny little book of collected essays which is now being sold in drugstores and at railroad stations (even to 'well-dressed gentlemen', as my publisher informed me with great triumph)."¹⁰⁷⁴

In spite of, or partly because of this fact, *Meaning in the Visual Arts* is a significant publication in terms of understanding Panofsky's American career. It establishes that this émigré art historian was keen to reach as wide an audience as possible in the United States. Panofsky's scholarship was intended for the educated layman, as well as the professional art historian, and he was now entirely confident that he could communicate his ideas effectively to both audiences.

With *Three Decades* comprising the 'Epilogue' to *Meaning in the Visual Arts*, Panofsky used an unaltered reprint of his "scholarly manifesto", *The History of Art as a Humanistic Discipline*, as his 'Introduction'.¹⁰⁷⁵ Once more, and for a 'general' or 'popular' audience, Panofsky was outlining, in digestible terms, the *wissenschaftliche* principles of 'humanistic' scholarship and the place of art history within a wider conception of the humanities. Significantly, *Meaning in the Visual Arts* was thus 'bookended' by, on the one hand, the 'American' Panofsky's introductory statement of scholarly rationale, and, on the other, by his measured, critical reflection upon the American academic and intellectual environment.

¹⁰⁷¹ E. Panofsky, 'Three Decades of Art History in the United States: Impressions of a Transplanted European', *College Art Journal*, 14:1, fall 1954, pp7-27.

¹⁰⁷² E. Panofsky, *Meaning in the Visual Arts: Papers In and On Art History*, 1955.

¹⁰⁷³ See, for example, Panofsky to Richard Salomon, October 5th, 1955 (1846), Panofsky to Irene Gordon, September 30th, 1954 (AAA), and Panofsky to Edward Lowinsky, November 2nd, 1955 (1858).

¹⁰⁷⁴ Panofsky to Otto Vossler, October 27th, 1955 (1855).

¹⁰⁷⁵ *Meaning in the Visual Arts*, op. cit., 23-49.

Panofsky's 'Introductory' to *Studies in Iconology* comprised the first chapter of *Meaning in the Visual Arts*.¹⁰⁷⁶ Panofsky thus took the opportunity to reiterate what he considered to be the methodological principles of the history of art as a history of *meaning*. However, this 1955 restatement included a significant editorial alteration, one that reveals Panofsky's dissatisfaction with the way his 'method' had been appropriated. Whereas in his 1939 'Introductory' Panofsky had not actually used the term 'Iconology', in the 1955 re-print he made much more explicit the distinction between "Iconography" and "Iconology". In a detailed editorial insertion Panofsky informed the reader of *Meaning in the Visual Arts*,

The suffix 'graphy' derives from the Greek verb 'graphein', 'to write'; it implies a purely descriptive, often even statistical, method of procedure. Iconography is, therefore, a description and classification of images much as ethnography is a description and classification of human races: it is a limited and, as it were, ancillary study which informs us as to when and where specific themes were visualised by which specific motifs...[I]conography is an invaluable help for the establishment of dates, provenance, and, occasionally, authenticity; and it furnishes the necessary basis for all further interpretation. It does not, however, attempt to work out this interpretation for itself. It collects and classifies the evidence but does not consider itself obliged or entitled to investigate the genesis and significance of this evidence...In short, iconography considers only a part of all those elements which enter into the intrinsic content of a work of art and must be made explicit if the perception of this content is to become articulate and communicable. It is because of these severe restrictions which common usage, especially in this country, places upon the term 'iconography' that I propose to revive the good old word 'iconology' wherever iconography is taken out of its isolation and integrated with whichever other method, historical, psychological or critical, we may attempt to use in solving the riddle of the sphinx. For as the suffix 'graphy' denotes something descriptive, so does the suffix 'logy' – derived from 'logos', which means 'thought' or 'reason' – denote something interpretive. 'Ethnology', for instance, is defined as a 'science of human races' by the same Oxford Dictionary that defines 'ethnography' as a 'description of human races', and Webster explicitly warns against a confusion of the two terms inasmuch as 'ethnography is properly restricted to the purely descriptive treatment of peoples and races while ethnology denotes their comparative study.' So I conceive of iconology as an iconography turned interpretive and thus becoming an integral part of the study of art instead of being confined to the role of a preliminary statistical survey.¹⁰⁷⁷

This significant amendment, made especially for his American readers, indicates just how dissatisfied was Panofsky with the more 'pragmatic' and 'programmatically' implementations of his 'method'. Even

¹⁰⁷⁶ 'Iconography and Iconology: An Introduction to the Study of Renaissance Art', *Meaning in the Visual Arts*, pp51-81.

¹⁰⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, p57-8.

into the mid-1950s he remained very much concerned that many American practitioners were not engaging his ‘methodology’ with the requisite ‘humanistic’ spirit. Panofsky believed there remained among American art historians a propensity for approaching their subject matter in a positivistic or ‘scientific’ manner, without the requisite concern for the theoretical exigencies of a properly historical or ‘humanistic’ discipline. Panofsky was adamant that the history of art should be acknowledged as an interpretive, speculative pursuit. The responsible, ‘humanistic’ practitioner acknowledged this, and thus attempted to check and balance their own subjective input into their interpretations. This was the basis for Panofsky’s understanding of *The History of Art as a Humanistic Discipline*, and he obviously thought it well worth reiterating in 1955.

The lengthy editorial ‘gloss’, with its specific reference to particularly *American* ‘limitations’, also indicates the extent to which Panofsky had grown comfortable with his role in America. Now considered something of an elder statesman for the history of art in the United States Panofsky felt much more assured in terms of laying down the principles of his discipline in an unequivocal manner.

Panofsky’s methodological manifestoes and his “Impressions of a Transplanted European” bookend six other papers in *Meaning in the Visual Arts*; essays that are varied in subject matter, and three of which were translated by Panofsky from their original German.¹⁰⁷⁸ The essays in this ‘popular’ publication are by no means ‘simple’ or ‘dumbed down’, but they are eminently *readable*. Each was chosen by Panofsky to demonstrate, in its own way, his ‘Iconological’ art history in practice – that is, the study of the history of art as a means of understanding human history and human development. Some of the essays in *Meaning in the Visual Arts* he developed into lecture presentations at the time, and these were delivered at universities across the East Coast. On one such occasion Panofsky described his talk on *Titian’s Allegory of Prudence* as,

“...a little study in method as applied to one specific problem – a study in method which would show the students how the investigation of such a specific problem may lead into fields apparently remote from the donnés...I personally prefer talks of the latter kind which give the audience a glimpse into the workshop instead of confronting them with the results the achievement of which remains undisclosed.”¹⁰⁷⁹

¹⁰⁷⁸ The three essays originally written in German were *The History of the Theory of Human Proportions* (1921), *The First Page of Giorgio Vasari’s ‘Libro’* (1930), and *Albrecht Dürer and Classical Antiquity* (1921/2). For full details of where these and the other essays were first published, see *Meaning in the Visual Arts*, op. cit., p13-14.

¹⁰⁷⁹ Panofsky to Stephen K. Bailey, October 31st, 1955 (AAA). Panofsky also lectured on *Dürer and Classical Antiquity* at Vassar in 1949. Panofsky to Krautheimer, October 13th, 1949 (AAA).

Rather than abstract theoretical exposition Panofsky was keen to demonstrate and to validate his 'method' in America through active example. Panofsky obviously wanted to give his American audience an insight into how to 'do' art history; an example of how his methodology worked in practice, how it could be *applied*.

Although *Meaning in the Visual Arts* contained no new material, taken as a whole it is emblematic of Panofsky's American career and his overall approach to the process of acculturation. He was making a concerted effort to channel a level of continuity and transference between his 'German' and 'American' periods, but he also understood the particular requirements of his American audience, and the need to be 'digestible', or 'popular' even. *Meaning in the Visual Arts* is thus representative of Panofsky's attempt to communicate effectively his own conception of *Kunstwissenschaft* to an American audience.

By far the most substantial paper in *Meaning in the Visual Arts* is 'The First Page of Giorgio Vasari's *Libro: A Study on the Gothic Style in the Judgement of the Italian Renaissance*'.¹⁰⁸⁰ This was one of Panofsky's early German-language essays that he translated in 1955, and it was a significant choice. Panofsky began by pointing out how Vasari, "the very father of our discipline,"¹⁰⁸¹ had deliberately enframed a drawing he owned and attributed to Cimabue in a "pronouncedly Gothicizing style."¹⁰⁸² After expounding upon the well-known antipathy felt by 'Renaissance' writers towards all things 'Gothic', Panofsky then asked the rhetorical question, how could Vasari enframe his 'Cimabue' drawing in a style to which he had such an obvious aversion?¹⁰⁸³ The answer, according to Panofsky, was that Vasari understood Cimabue's 'style' in a *historical* sense. Cimabue was the first artist in Vasari's *Lives*, he who, after a long period of decline and degeneration, "gave the first beginning to the new method of drawing and painting."¹⁰⁸⁴ Yet, although Cimabue's work was recognised as an important stage in the new development of art, he was, nevertheless, considered a mere augury for the achievements of Vasari's illustrious contemporaries. Thus, acknowledging that Cimabue was not 'modern', Vasari provided the artist's drawing with a fittingly contextual 'frame'.

For Panofsky, this application of *historical consciousness*, however unsound, was symbolic of *the* defining achievement of 'The Renaissance'. It was during this period, Panofsky asserted, that the past was first understood in terms of distinct epochs, with discrete characteristics and

¹⁰⁸⁰ *Meaning in the Visual Arts*, pp206-276.

¹⁰⁸¹ Panofsky to G.P. Nuti, May 18th, 1965 (AAA).

¹⁰⁸² *The First Page of Giorgio Vasari's 'Libro'*, p213.

¹⁰⁸³ *Ibid.*, p213-214.

¹⁰⁸⁴ Vasari, quoted by Panofsky, *Ibid.*, p212.

'physiognomies'. It was a new historical consciousness, or *perspective*, that allowed Vasari to give his drawing by Cimabue a 'Gothic' frame:

Vasari's inconspicuous 'Gothic' frame bears witness, at a relatively early date, to the rise of a new attitude toward the heritage of the Middle Ages: it demonstrates the possibility of interpreting medieval works of art, regardless of medium and maniera, as specimens of a 'period style.'¹⁰⁸⁵

Panofsky also noted that in the attempt to be 'historical' Vasari was able to suppress his own proclivities and biases. Vasari had made the attempt to understand the past on its own terms. The application of this (albeit nascent) historical 'objectivity' during the Renaissance was considered by Panofsky an important first step in the development of that historical or art-historical consciousness he himself considered so important:

Uninfluenced by private predilections...Vasari's frame marks the beginning of a strictly art-historical approach which...proceeds, to borrow Kant's phrase, in 'disinterested' manner. Some hundred years later, this new approach...was to result in the astonishingly accurate survey drawings made in preparation of St John in the Lantern. It was to bear fruit in the work of the great historians of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. And it was, ultimately, to give direction to our own activities.¹⁰⁸⁶

Giorgio Vasari was thus posited by Panofsky as a kind of intellectual forerunner of the historical 'disinterestedness', the historical *discipline*, that he had himself outlined as the defining characteristic of the 'humanistic' art historian.¹⁰⁸⁷

Panofsky made clear that Vasari should not be understood as a 'modern' historian.¹⁰⁸⁸ He was though, quite consciously proposing a link between the historical programme first mapped out by Renaissance humanists such as Vasari, and his own 'humanistic' concern with historical responsibility, historical discipline. In his essay on Vasari, Panofsky provided his own art-historical and scholarly *Weltanschauung* with a lineage reaching back to the Renaissance.¹⁰⁸⁹ The Renaissance provided a kind of intellectual paradigm for the 'humanistic' scholarly values that Panofsky wanted to expound and promote in America. This same self-conscious identification with, and use of the past, for contemporary purposes, would underpin Panofsky's last major American work – *Renaissance and Renascences in Western Art*.

¹⁰⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, p263.

¹⁰⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, p263-4. For this, see also, p246.

¹⁰⁸⁷ 'The History of Art as a Humanistic Discipline', in *Meaning in the Visual Arts*, p40-1.

¹⁰⁸⁸ *The First Page of Giorgio Vasari's 'Libro'*, p244.

¹⁰⁸⁹ Panofsky had also made this point in *Three Decades*, op. cit., p83.

Renaissance and Renascences in Western Art (1960)

Renaissance and Renascences in Western Art developed from a series of lectures delivered for The Institute of Art History at the University of Uppsala in 1952. Panofsky had first been invited to Sweden by his friend of long-standing, the museum curator and medievalist Carl Nordenfalk,¹⁰⁹⁰ but somewhat out of the blue he received an invitation, through the auspices of the Swedish Embassy in Washington, to provide the prestigious Gottesman Lectures.¹⁰⁹¹ The American philanthropist David Samuel Gottesman had funded this lectureship at the University of Uppsala to acknowledge the role played by the Swedish people and the Swedish Government in aiding Jewish victims of Nazi oppression. Gottesman held a deep faith “in humanistic research and its necessity to the survival of civilisation”, and the well-endowed Gottesman Lectures were designed to attract “world-renowned” scholars in the humanities who would help “to build up the liberalism and understanding that is so necessary to win the race against the weapons of man’s own creation.”¹⁰⁹² Panofsky had originally planned to rehash his Netherlandish lectures for Nordenfalk, but when he was honoured with the Gottesman commission, with publication required, he decided instead to lecture on ‘The Renaissance Problem in the History of Art’.¹⁰⁹³

The sudden change of topic necessitated that Panofsky put together a lecture series on the Renaissance in just over three months.¹⁰⁹⁴ However, as has been shown, a great deal of Panofsky’s German-language work had focussed on ‘Renaissance problems’ and he had also published and taught regularly on the period in America.¹⁰⁹⁵ As Panofsky would say of his Gottesman commission, “The whole would represent a kind of synopsis of ideas with which I have been concerned for nearly forty years.”¹⁰⁹⁶ Once again, this émigré scholar had felt his “tongue loosened” enough to confront a complex and involved historical issue in a large-scale lecture series and publication. And, once again, this would be a work founded upon many years of detailed research and study.

¹⁰⁹⁰ Carl Nordenfalk to Panofsky, August 25th, 1951 (AAA).

¹⁰⁹¹ Responding to this prestigious solicitation Panofsky wrote, “The invitation to deliver the Gottesman Lectures...and to address the old and famous University of Uppsala came as a complete surprise to me. This is an honour of which I must say, in all sincerity: ‘Utinam dignus essem’.” Panofsky to T. Talroth, March 25th, 1952 (AAA).

¹⁰⁹² Gregor Paulsson, ‘Editor’s Preface’, *Renaissance and Renascences in Western Art*, p.viii.

¹⁰⁹³ Panofsky to Gregor Paulsson, March 25th, 1952 (1534). See also Panofsky to Carl Nordenfalk, March 25th, 1952 (1533).

¹⁰⁹⁴ Panofsky submitted a 9-lecture programme on ‘The Renaissance Problem’ to the Gottesman Foundation at the end of March and he departed New York on July 10th.

¹⁰⁹⁵ In America, alongside such work as *Studies in Iconology: Humanistic Themes in the Art of the Renaissance*, Panofsky published detailed and lengthy articles dealing with Renaissance problems, such as, ‘The *Discovery of Honey* by Piero di Cosimo’, *Worcester Art Museum Annual*, 2, 1936-7, pp33-43; and *The Codex Huygens and Leonardo da Vinci’s Art Theory*, 1940. Panofsky’s two major American textbooks, on *Dürer* and *Early Netherlandish Painting*, also dealt with the ‘Renaissance problem’ to some extent.

¹⁰⁹⁶ Panofsky to Gregor Paulsson, March 25th, 1952 (1534).

Although the Italian Renaissance held a general, popular appeal, it was not a major field of interest in American historical scholarship when Panofsky first crossed the Atlantic. The 'positivist' outlook was particularly pronounced among American historians in the early part of the twentieth century, and in their efforts to forge a disciplinary identity they tended to concentrate their efforts on archival research and the examination of documents.¹⁰⁹⁷ In this environment 'The Renaissance' was considered much too spectral an imagining to be of serious scholarly interest; too tied up with theoretical, subjective notions of 'spirit' or, as Anthony Mohlo has put it, "indebted to idealist philosophical traditions, but rarely and then only minimally informed by the study of sources."¹⁰⁹⁸

Early American historians were drawn instead to the medieval world. Medieval archives provided a rich and fertile ground for historical conquest, and a sound basis on which to proceed.¹⁰⁹⁹ The forensic examination of historical documents did much to uncover the particular characteristics and the considerable achievements of the period, and American medievalists in the early twentieth-century soon provided a rejoinder to the idea that the Renaissance was a sudden 'rebirth' after a long and torpid 'Dark Age'. Indeed, by uncovering the classical influences and traditions that persisted throughout the so called Middle Ages, the 'revolting medievalists' began to challenge the distinctiveness, and thus the very notion of the celebrated Italian Renaissance.¹¹⁰⁰

Charles Homer Haskins, for example, perhaps the most noted American historian of the early twentieth-century, published a detailed study of the twelfth-century, asserting,

The title of this book will appear to many to contain a flagrant contradiction. A renaissance in the twelfth century! Do not the Middle Ages, that epoch of ignorance, stagnation, and gloom, stand in the sharpest contrast to the light and progress and freedom of the Italian Renaissance which followed? How could there be a renaissance in the twelfth century? The answer is that the continuity of history rejects such sharp and violent contrasts between successive periods, and that modern research shows us the Middle Ages less dark and less static, the Renaissance less bright and less sudden, than was once supposed.¹¹⁰¹

¹⁰⁹⁷ J. Higham, *History: Professional Scholarship in America*, 1965, p96-7.

¹⁰⁹⁸ A. Molho, 'The Italian Renaissance, Made in the USA', in *Imagined Histories: American Historians Interpret the Past*, A. Mohlo & G.S. Wood eds., pp263-294; p270.

¹⁰⁹⁹ S.H. Thomson, 'The Growth of a Discipline: Medieval Studies in America', in *Perspectives in Medieval History*, K.F. Drew & F.S. Lear eds., 1963 pp1-18.

¹¹⁰⁰ The primary source for understanding this 'Revolt of the Medievalists' remains, W.K. Ferguson, *The Renaissance in Historical Thought*, op. cit., especially pp329-385.

¹¹⁰¹ C.H. Haskins, *The Renaissance of the Twelfth Century*, 1927, preface, pv.

Haskins' work proved hugely influential and helped define the parameters for American medieval scholarship.¹¹⁰² Further challenges to 'The Renaissance' soon followed.¹¹⁰³

American historians of medieval science were particularly trenchant and polemical in contesting the claims made for the Renaissance. George Sarton, for example, asserted that the really 'practical' advances in human society had taken place either side of Italy's *cultural* renaissance; and he even suggested that,

From the scientific point of view, the Renaissance was not a renaissance at all...[T]o the historian of science...it is on the whole disappointing...[T]he Renaissance was less a genuine revival than a halfway rest between two revivals...an anti-climax between two peaks.¹¹⁰⁴

Lynn Thorndike, went even further, questioning,

....whether there was not a falling off in civilisation in general and in scientific productiveness in particular after the remarkable activity of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries – in short, whether instead of a renaissance something of a backsliding did not set in with Petrarch...Candid inquirers are becoming increasingly convinced that the true Renaissance occurred around the twelfth rather than the fifteenth century.¹¹⁰⁵

For those émigré 'humanists' who entered America in the early thirties this was a challenge that had to be answered. Scholars such as Panofsky and Ernst Cassirer, Hans Baron, Paul Oskar Kristeller, Felix Gilbert and Theodor Ernst Mommsen, had begun or established their careers in Germany between the wars, and for them the Renaissance held a particular significance. As has been shown, the German historical professions had remained largely conservative, nationalistic, and even chauvinist during the Weimar period.¹¹⁰⁶ The 'Middle Ages' provided the main source material for German historians seeking to reveal the historical roots of the German *Volk*; just as the Reformation was of great interest because it had particularly 'German' roots and significance. Accordingly, the fifteenth-century Renaissance (the study of which was largely founded by the Swiss scholar Jacob Burckhardt) was not so much ignored as denounced as a distinctly Italian phenomenon – interminably foreign

¹¹⁰² For a near contemporary account of Haskins' work and its influence, see Ferguson, *The Renaissance in Historical Thought*, op. cit., p331-2. Norman Cantor provides a more contemporary evaluation in *Inventing the Middle Ages*, op. cit., p245-285.

¹¹⁰³ See, for example, Robert Sabatino Lopez's claim for the tenth-century Renaissance in 'Still Another Renaissance?', *The American Historical Review*, 57:1, October 1951, pp1-21. The title of this essay provides some indication of the plethora of 'Renaissances' that were 'uncovered' at this time. For a similar view to Haskins', see, C.H. McIlwain, 'Medieval Institutions in the Modern World', *Speculum*, 16:3, July 1941, pp275-283.

¹¹⁰⁴ G. Sarton, 'Science in the Renaissance', in *The Civilisation of the Renaissance*, 1929, p75-6.

¹¹⁰⁵ L. Thorndike, *Science and Thought in the Fifteenth Century*, 1929, p10.

¹¹⁰⁶ See, for example, W.J. Mommsen, *German Historiography During the Weimar Republic*, op. cit.

and inimical to German interests.¹¹⁰⁷ In the politically charged setting of Weimar scholarship it was no coincidence that scholars such as Panofsky, Cassirer, Kristeller and Baron identified with Burckhardtian scholarship.¹¹⁰⁸ These individuals operated largely outside of the German academic orthodoxy and their scholarship reflected this. With their liberal principles and Jewish backgrounds they proffered an objective and pluralistic view of history, and as James Sheehan has pointed out, for these historians,

[T]he Renaissance was by its nature cosmopolitan, a European rather than a German phenomenon, untouched by the toxins of racism, free of the narrow restraints of nationalist historiography.¹¹⁰⁹

These Jewish scholars conceived of the Renaissance as an important period in the development of that humanist tradition, those humanist ideals, with which they themselves identified.¹¹¹⁰

It is now well recognised that the work of émigrés such as Cassirer, Panofsky, Kristeller, Baron, Mommsen and Gilbert actually constituted Renaissance scholarship in Weimar Germany.¹¹¹¹ These were, of course, individual scholars, with different approaches and different points of view, but, in exile they were united in their efforts to defend and promulgate the concept of 'The Renaissance'. At the Annual Meeting of the American Historical Association, held in Chicago on December 29th, 1941, in a session devoted to fifteenth-century Italy, Hans Baron and the American historian of science Dana B. Durand debated 'The Originality of the Renaissance.' These presentations were then published in an early edition of *The Journal of the History of Ideas*, supplemented with 'Discussion'

¹¹⁰⁷ See, Ferguson, *The Renaissance in Historical Thought*, op. cit., p368; & J.J. Sheehan, 'The German Renaissance in America', in *The Italian Renaissance in the Twentieth Century: Acts of an International Conference Florence, Villa I Tatti, June 9-11, 1999*, 2002, A.J. Grieco, M. Rocke, F.G. Superbi, eds., pp47-63; p55.

¹¹⁰⁸ For Cassirer's identification with Burckhardt, see, 'Force and Freedom: Remarks on the English Edition of Jacob Burckhardt's *Reflections on History*', *The American Scholar*, 13, Autumn 1944, pp407-417. See, also, Hans Baron, 'Burckhardt's *Civilisation of the Renaissance* A Century After its Publication', *Renaissance News*, 13:3, Autumn 1960, pp207-222; & Felix Gilbert, *History: Politics or Culture? Reflections on Ranke and Burckhardt*, 1990.

¹¹⁰⁹ Sheehan, *The German Renaissance in America*, p56. See also G. Iggers, *Refugee Historians From Nazi Germany*, op. cit.

¹¹¹⁰ Even Paul Oskar Kristeller, who was famously reticent about inviting any anachronism into his work through personal identification with the past, wrote, "In my opinion...Ficino's...greatest significance as a thinker (and also as a scholar) rests on the fact that he constitutes an important member and link...in that golden chain which is the tradition of rational metaphysics that leads from the Presocratics and Plato to Kant, Hegel and beyond. In my long career as a scholar, and in the midst of hard, difficult and often disastrous times, this tradition has been for me a rock of intellectual and moral support, much stronger than the numerous fashionable theories and ideologies that have come and gone in rapid succession over the years." *Marsilio Ficino and his Work after Five Hundred Years*, 1987, p16.

¹¹¹¹ See, Mommsen, *German Historiography during the Weimar Republic*, op. cit., p64; & O. G. Oexle, 'Was There Anything to Learn? American Historians and German Medieval Scholarship: A Comment', in *Medieval Germany in America*, 1996, pp32-44; p37.

from Kristeller, Cassirer and Lynn Thorndike, among others.¹¹¹² On this very public platform the German émigré scholars sought to defend the Renaissance from the attacks of the American ‘revolting medievalists’.

After this important symposium in 1941 the émigré scholars continued to bolster the conception of the Renaissance with copious publications, numerous academic conferences and the creation of historical associations devoted to the period.¹¹¹³ It is now well recognised that it was largely through their intellectual rigour and their professional scholarly standards that the Renaissance became firmly established as a major field of scholarly interest in the English language.¹¹¹⁴ Indeed, the weight and seeming authority of the émigré contribution seemed to put an end to the ‘Renaissance question’ altogether, at least until the late 1970s.¹¹¹⁵

It is within this historical framework that we must locate Panofsky’s English-language Renaissance scholarship, and his most significant contribution to the discussion, *Renaissance and Renascences in Western Art*.¹¹¹⁶ The art historian had worked closely with Cassirer during their time in Hamburg, but he was also very well acquainted with Baron, Kristeller, ‘Ted’ Mommsen and Felix Gilbert in America.¹¹¹⁷ Panofsky certainly considered his own work in the context of that of his fellow émigrés.

¹¹¹² See the *Journal of the History of Ideas*, 4:1, January 1943, pp1-74.

¹¹¹³ Cassirer and Kristeller published, with the American John Herman Randall Jr., a compendium of stand-out ‘Renaissance’ texts that became the standard reader for American college students: *The Renaissance Philosophy of Man. Selected Writings with Critical Introductions*, E. Cassirer, P.O. Kristeller, & J.H. Randall Jr., eds., 1948. Baron’s *Crisis of the Early Italian Renaissance*, published in 1955, also had a lasting impact. For Baron’s influence, see R. Witt, ‘The Crisis After Forty Years’, *The American Historical Review*, 101;1, February 1996, pp110-118. Kristeller was a prolific writer, and probably contributed more than any other single individual to Renaissance scholarship in the English language. See, M.C. Horowitz, ‘Paul Oskar Kristeller’s Impact on Renaissance Studies’, *Journal of the History of Ideas*, 39:4, October 1978, pp677-683; & J. Monfasani ed., *Kristeller Reconsidered: Essays on his Life and Scholarship*, 2005.

¹¹¹⁴ See, A. Mohlo, *The Italian Renaissance: Made in the USA*, op. cit., p270 & p273; E. Muir, ‘The Italian Renaissance in America’, *The American Historical Review*, 100:4, October 1995, pp1095-1118; p1108; & Charles Trinkaus ‘Humanism, Religion, Society: Concepts and Motivations of Some Recent Studies’, *Renaissance Quarterly*, 29:4, Winter 1976, pp676-713; p679.

¹¹¹⁵ See, W.J. Bouwsma, ‘The Renaissance and the Drama of Western History’, *The American Historical Review*, 84;1, February 1979, pp1-15, & P. Findlen & K. Gouwens, ‘The Persistence of the Renaissance’, *The American Historical Review*, 103;1, February 1998, pp51-54.

¹¹¹⁶ Panofsky is cited alongside Cassirer, Baron, Kristeller et al. by Mohlo, Muir, and Trinkaus (op. cit.). See also, R. Starn, ‘Who’s Afraid of the Renaissance?’, in *The Past and Future of Medieval Studies*, 1994, J. Van Engen ed., pp129-147, p138.

¹¹¹⁷ Kristeller, on different occasions, held temporary memberships at the IAS, where he worked alongside Panofsky. The two men communicated regularly on ‘Renaissance’ matters. See, for example, Kristeller to Panofsky, November 25th, 1953 (1654), & Kristeller to Panofsky, March 29th, 1954 (AAA). For Panofsky’s discussion of ‘Renaissance problems’ with ‘Ted’ Mommsen, see, Panofsky to Theodor E. Mommsen, July 2nd, 1953 (1630) & September 6th, 1957 (2121). In 1951 Panofsky also provided a reference to the Guggenheim Foundation for Felix Gilbert, indicating that the young scholar’s project “...will go a long way to clarify the question as to whether and in what sense there was a Renaissance.” Panofsky to John Simon Guggenheim Memorial Foundation, November 26th, 1951 (1498).

In 1944, for example, he published an essay in the *Kenyon Review* entitled *Renaissance and Renascences*.¹¹¹⁸ As he informed Fritz Saxl,

*“This paper grew out of an address to Graduate students provoked by the now fashionable doctrine that there was no such thing as a ‘Renaissance’ (chief exponent: Lynn Thorndike).”*¹¹¹⁹

Indeed, Panofsky quite consciously proffered this essay as an addendum to the contributions of Cassirer, Kristeller, Baron and Thorndike to the *Journal of the History of Ideas*.¹¹²⁰ Panofsky had been left somewhat bemused that there was no art-historical input to this noted disputation. Discussing the ‘Renaissance problem’ with Hans Baron he noted,

*“One of the roots of the trouble is, I believe, that the art historical aspect of the whole thing is so widely disregarded in these discussions. After all, the whole idea of the Renaissance was very much influenced by the awareness of a new style in sculpture, painting, and architecture. Burckhardt himself was constitutionally an art historian, and it was, therefore, quite ununderstandable that the history of art was not represented at all at the famous symposium reported in the Journal of the History of Ideas.”*¹¹²¹

Panofsky believed this omission was indicative of the fact that the history of art remained still on the margins of ‘serious’ academic scholarship in America. Although the discipline had taken great strides under the influence of the émigré art historians, the stigma of dilettantism proved hard to shake off. Whereas Panofsky believed the ‘discipline’ of art history only made sense within a wider, multidisciplinary understanding of ‘humanistic’ scholarship, in America he found that the different academic disciplines tended towards a certain self-isolation,¹¹²² and this too made it difficult for the art historian to have his work considered on a par with more conventional ‘history’.¹¹²³ It is telling, in this regard, that when discussing Renaissance problems with friends such as ‘Ted’ Mommsen, Panofsky would, with pseudo self-deprecation, often refer to himself as a “mere layman in your field”.¹¹²⁴ Thus, in his endeavour to provide a significant contribution to the ‘Renaissance Question’ in America, Panofsky was also intent on demonstrating that the history of art was an important, even integral, branch of intellectual history.

¹¹¹⁸ E. Panofsky, ‘Renaissance and Renascences’, *The Kenyon Review*, 6, 1944, pp201-236.

¹¹¹⁹ Panofsky to Saxl, December 14th, 1943 (922).

¹¹²⁰ *Renaissance and Renascences*, (1944), p235.

¹¹²¹ Panofsky to Hans Baron, October 23rd, 1950 (1401).

¹¹²² Panofsky, *Three Decades*, op. cit., p98-101.

¹¹²³ Panofsky felt obliged to inform one American correspondent, “One of the few convictions I can claim to have is that art history is, and should remain, history.” Panofsky to J. Siegel, March 24th, 1960 (AAA).

¹¹²⁴ Panofsky to Theodor E. Mommsen, September 6th, 1957 (2121).

Renaissance and Renascences in Western Art was also formulated as a response to those sceptics who believed it unhelpful, or even impossible, to write of historical ‘ages’ or ‘periods’.¹¹²⁵ This was a discussion very much prevalent at this time. In the positivist environment of American scholarship the tendency was to avoid (if not altogether disparage) any attempt at over-arching, ‘spirit of the age’ theories. Dana B. Durand, for example, in his response to Hans Baron, had registered his scepticism of any attempt to define the Renaissance through the conjuring of some “intangible spirit.” Such claims Durand pointed out, “are not, of course, subject to absolute proof or disproof.”¹¹²⁶ The American philosopher George Boas also suggested that to write history in terms of ‘periods’ was “misleading, not to say downright unjustified.”¹¹²⁷ For many of the émigrés, steeped in idealist philosophy and used to a much more ‘speculative’ approach to history, the construction of historical frameworks, be they termed ‘periods’ or ‘styles’, was a significant, indeed necessary element in the understanding of the past.¹¹²⁸ This was certainly the case for Panofsky, whose interpretive approach to the history of art demanded that the examination of individual artworks, or ‘historical documents’, always be related to a wider historical context, and vice versa.¹¹²⁹ Panofsky was aware that those who took issue with the idea of ‘periodisation’ very often pointed their guns most resolutely at ‘The Renaissance’.¹¹³⁰ So, in his endeavour to provide a comprehensive Renaissance textbook Panofsky was also attempting to demonstrate that it was possible, indeed profitable, to write history in terms of ‘periods’.

In *Renaissance and Renascences in Western Art* Panofsky set out to demonstrate that the Renaissance possessed a distinct “physiognomy”.¹¹³¹ He did not, of course, subscribe to the idea that the medieval period was one of total decline and degeneration; he was far too accomplished a historian for that. Indeed, Panofsky readily acknowledged that the Renaissance was “linked to the Middle Ages by a thousand ties.”¹¹³² Nonetheless, he understood this as “a continuity which no one

¹¹²⁵ *Renaissance and Renascences in Western Art*, p1.

¹¹²⁶ D.B. Durand, ‘Tradition and Innovation in Fifteenth Century Italy’, *Journal of the History of Ideas*, 4:1, January 1943, pp1-20.

¹¹²⁷ G. Boas, ‘Historical Periods’, *Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*, 11:3, March 1953, pp248-254; p248.

¹¹²⁸ See, for example, Paul Frankl’s response to Boas’ essay: ‘Historical or Stylistic Periods?’, *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*, 13:4, June 1955, pp451-457.

¹¹²⁹ Ernst Gombrich was one émigré scholar who levelled a serious critique of this kind of approach to history. See *In Search of Cultural History. Philip Maurice Denecke Lecture, 1967, 1969* (Gombrich refers explicitly to Panofsky on p44-5). For more recent analyses of the debate over ‘periodisation’ in general see B. Mitrović, ‘Humanist Art History and Its Enemies: Erwin Panofsky on the Individualism-Holism Debate’, *Konsthistorisk Tidskrift*, 78:2, 2009, pp57-76, & T. D. Kaufmann, ‘Periodization and its Discontents’, *Journal of Art Historiography*, 2, June 2010, http://arthistoriography.files.wordpress.com/2011/02/media_152489_en.pdf (accessed July 26th, 2013).

¹¹³⁰ *Renaissance and Renascences in Western Art*, p5.

¹¹³¹ *Ibid.*, p4.

¹¹³² *Ibid.*, p6.

would deny but which represents only one aspect of the phenomenon.”¹¹³³ And it was with this in mind that he endeavoured to provide a level of demarcation for the different ‘periods’.

Central to Panofsky’s definition was his claim that the Renaissance was the first ‘period’ to actively envisage history in terms of ‘periodization’. In this respect he asserted that the Renaissance had begun with Petrarch.¹¹³⁴ Panofsky pointed out that Petrarch had looked to the classical world as exemplar, holding it as self-evident that, in contrast to the ignominy of his own period, the glory and grandeur of Antiquity had come to an end, that its light had been doused. Petrarch thus formalised a historical model that for the first time envisioned the classical past as a distinct entity, undeniably distinguished and estranged from the present.¹¹³⁵

Petrarch’s heirs and successors developed this powerful historical paradigm further; purposefully promoting their ‘period’ as a ‘re-birth’ of the past glory of the classical world, and disparaging the intervening ‘period’ – the *Dark Ages*, or *Middle Ages* – as one of degeneration and decline. As Panofsky would put it,

From the fourteenth through the sixteenth century, then, and from one end of Europe to the other, the men of the Renaissance were convinced that the period in which they lived was a ‘new age’ as sharply different from the medieval past as the medieval past had been from classical antiquity and marked by a concerted effort to revive the culture of the latter.¹¹³⁶

To the ‘revolting medievalists’, Panofsky was not slow to point out the irony that,

...even those who refuse to recognise the Renaissance as a period *sui generis* and *sui iuris* tend to accept it as such whenever an occasion arises to disparage it (much as a government may vilify or threaten a regime to which it has refused recognition)...In compelling the Renaissance-denying medievalists, like the rest of us, to speak and think of ‘their’ period as the ‘Middle Ages’, the Renaissance may be said to have taken its revenge on them: it is only on the assumption of an interval between a past supposed to have been submerged and a present supposed to have rescued this past from submersion, that such terms as ‘media aetas’ or ‘medium aevum’ could come into being.¹¹³⁷

¹¹³³ Panofsky to Erik Forssman, July 13th, 1956 (1967).

¹¹³⁴ *Renaissance and Renascences in Western Art*, p10.

¹¹³⁵ *Renaissance and Renascences* (1944), p228. Panofsky was greatly influenced in his views on Petrarch and the Renaissance by the scholarship of Theodor E. Mommsen. See, *Renaissance and Renascences in Western Art*, pxi. See also, Panofsky to Mommsen, July 2nd, 1953 (1630). Discussing Petrarch’s “periodisation of history” with Kristeller, Panofsky wrote, “From the point of view of the art historian this periodisation, so splendidly discussed by Mommsen...is perhaps his most important contribution.” Panofsky to Kristeller, September 8th, 1964 (AAA).

¹¹³⁶ *Renaissance and Renascences in Western Art*, p36.

¹¹³⁷ *Ibid.*, p8.

It was this conscious assertion of a discontinuity with the 'medieval' past that, for Panofsky, distinguished 'The Renaissance' from previous *renascences*. Medieval *renascences*, he noted, had looked upon the classical past in terms of continuation, revival, or resuscitation:

The Carolingian revival had been started because it was felt that a great many things needed overhauling: the administrative system, the liturgy, the language, and the arts. When this was realised, the leading spirits turned to antiquity...much as a man whose motor car has broken down might fall back on an automobile inherited from his grandfather which, when reconditioned (and let us not forget that the Carolingians themselves spoke only of 'renovare' or 'redintegare' instead of using such words as 'reflorescere', 'revivere' or 'reviviscere', let alone 'renasci'), will still give excellent service and may even prove more comfortable than the newer model ever was. In other words, the Carolingians approached the Antique with a feeling of legitimate heirs who had neglected or even forgotten their property for a time and now claimed it for precisely those uses for which it had been introduced.¹¹³⁸

As the men of the Renaissance conceived of Antiquity as a distinct and separate entity they could only reconstitute this classical past through active, *constructive*, historical effort. In Panofsky's mind the establishment of this intellectual/historical paradigm, what he referred to as the "humanistic *Geschichtskonstruktion*",¹¹³⁹ engendered a radically new conception of human history. As he asserted,

Both in the 9th and in the 12th Centuries it would have been unthinkable – or, if thinkable, plainly heretical – to divide history into two eras of light separated by one of darkness, and thereby to affix the stigma of obscurity to the advent of Christianity. On the contrary, history was, and had to be, conceived of as a continuous development from pagan darkness to Christian light: from the era 'before the Law' through the era 'under the Law' to the era 'under Grace'.¹¹⁴⁰

Panofsky was proposing a *qualitative* distinction between the fifteenth-century *Renaissance* and previous medieval *renascences*. He suggested that the new "humanistic *Geschichtskonstruktion*" allowed the classical past to be understood, for the first time, on its own terms. And this, in turn, he asserted, had engendered new possibilities in terms of man's self-conception. During the medieval period, Panofsky claimed, there had been an unresolvable sense of schism in terms of any understanding of the past:

(T)here was, on the one hand, a sense of unbroken continuity with classical antiquity that linked the 'Holy Roman Empire of the Middle Ages' to Caesar and Augustus, medieval music to Pythagoras, medieval philosophy to Plato and Aristotle, medieval

¹¹³⁸ *Ibid.*, p108-9.

¹¹³⁹ Panofsky to Erich Auerbach, June 19th, 1955 (1825).

¹¹⁴⁰ *Renaissance and Renascences*, (1944), op. cit., p228.

grammar to Donatus – and, on the other, a consciousness of the insurmountable gap that separated the Christian present from the pagan past.¹¹⁴¹

In a nod to Warburgian historical-psychology, Panofsky suggested that the tangible connection with a heterodox, heathen past remained the source of great unease in the medieval-Christian mind. As he claimed of the medieval period,

The classical world was not approached historically but pragmatically, as something far-off yet, in a sense, still alive, and therefore, at once potentially useful and potentially dangerous. It is significant that the classical philosophers and poets were frequently represented in the same Oriental costumes as the Jewish prophets, and that the thirteenth century spoke of the Romans, their monuments and their gods as sarrazin or sarazinois, employing the same word for the pagans of old and the infidels of its own age. For want of a 'perspective distance' classical civilization could not be viewed as a coherent cultural system within which all things belonged together.¹¹⁴²

It was in this sense, in Panofsky's opinion at least, that the constructive intellectualisation of a historical distance, the conscious acknowledgement of a historical discontinuity, was a new *achievement* of the Renaissance. Held at a rationalised distance, the paganism of the classical world could, for the first time, be understood more critically and more 'objectively'. As a circumscribed object of study, requiring conscious *re-creation*, antiquity became a 'period' of *historical* interest, not tangible associative connection. As Panofsky asserted, this went some way towards alleviating the sense of disquiet and menace that had resulted from the more associative link to a fallacious, idolatrous, pagan past in the medieval period:

The 'distance' created by the Renaissance deprived antiquity of its realness. The classical world ceased to be both a possession and a menace. It became instead the object of a passionate nostalgia...[M]edieval renaissances...were free from this nostalgia. Antiquity was still around...so to speak. The Renaissance came to realise that Pan was dead – that the world of ancient Greece and Rome...was lost like Milton's Paradise and capable of being regained only in the spirit. The classical past was looked upon, for the first time, as a totality cut off from the present; and therefore, as an ideal to be longed for instead of a reality to be both utilised and feared.¹¹⁴³

Freeing man from an irrational, superstitious relationship with the heathen past, the "humanistic *geschichtskonstruktion*" laid the seeds of a new intellectual framework, a new understanding of

¹¹⁴¹ *Renaissance and Renaissances in Western Art*, p110.

¹¹⁴² *Ibid.*, p111.

¹¹⁴³ *Ibid.*, p111-3.

human autonomy and the potential for self-determination.¹¹⁴⁴ Indeed, Panofsky was serious in his belief that the Renaissance thus entailed “a change of consciousness”:

[T]he minds of men had changed...[T]he individual had in fact become intensely conscious of his more independent and, for this very reason, more problematic position in relation to God, society, and his own self.¹¹⁴⁵

It was in this sense that Panofsky quite consciously situated his ‘Renaissance’ in the tradition of that of Ernst Cassirer and Jacob Burckhardt.¹¹⁴⁶

Panofsky provided the art-historical ‘evidence’ for his theory of the Italian Renaissance with his “principle of disjunction”. He pointed out that,

[W]herever in the high and later Middle Ages a work of art borrows its form from a classical model, this form is almost invariably invested with a non-classical, normally Christian significance; wherever in the high and later Middle Ages a work of art borrows its theme from classical poetry, legend, history or mythology, this theme is quite invariably presented in a non-classical, normally contemporary form.¹¹⁴⁷

This ‘principle of disjunction’ was envisaged by Panofsky as a kind of psychological ‘tic’ resulting from the unresolved and ‘schismic’ nature of the ‘medieval’ view of the past.¹¹⁴⁸ In Panofsky’s understanding the medieval mind could not conceive of classical form and classical content together – this was far too potent a combination; too anarchical in regards the medieval Christian worldview:

To the high-medieval mind Jason and Medea...were acceptable as long as they were depicted as Gothic aristocrats playing chess in a Gothic chamber. Classical gods and goddesses were acceptable as long as they lent their beautiful presence to Christian saints, to Eve or to the Virgin Mary. But a Thisbe clad in classical costume and waiting for Pyramus by a classical mausoleum would have been an archaeological reconstruction incompatible with the sense of continuity; and an image of Mars or Venus classical in form as well as significance was either...an ‘idol’ or talisman or, conversely, served to personify a vice.¹¹⁴⁹

It was only with the more *historical* understanding achieved during the Renaissance, with classical civilization viewed from a ‘perspective distance’ and understood as “a coherent cultural system”,

¹¹⁴⁴ Described by Panofsky as “this memorable process of self-realization (‘realization’ in the double sense of ‘becoming aware’ and ‘becoming real’).” Ibid., p9.

¹¹⁴⁵ *Renaissance and Renascences* (1944), p232.

¹¹⁴⁶ See E. Cassirer, *The Individual and the Cosmos*, op. cit. & J. Burckhardt, *The Civilization of the Renaissance in Italy* (1860), 1944, especially p81.

¹¹⁴⁷ *Renaissance and Renascences in Western Art*, p84. Panofsky discusses this “principle of disjunction” in previous *Renaissance and Renascences* (1944); the ‘Introductory’ to *Studies in Iconology, & Classical Mythology in Medieval Art*, in *Metropolitan Museum Studies*, IV, 1932/33, pp.228-280.

¹¹⁴⁸ *Renaissance and Renascences in Western Art*, p106.

¹¹⁴⁹ Ibid., p111-2.

that there could be, in the visual arts, a reunification of classical form and classical subject matter. Just as the “humanistic *geschichtskonstruktion*” meant antiquity was held at an irrevocable distance and could be understood more critically, more rationally, so too could pagan relics and symbols be held at an intellectual arm’s length, and understood critically, objectively even. As such, they were divested of any immanent power and made more approachable, more usable and, ultimately, more venerable:

It was for the Italian Renaissance to reintegrate the separated elements. Rendering unto Caesar the things which are Caesar’s, Renaissance art...put an end to the paradoxical medieval practice of restricting classical form to non-classical subject matter...And we need only to look at Michelangelo’s ‘Bacchus’ and ‘Leda’, Raphael’s Farnesina frescoes, Giorgione’s ‘Venus’, Correggio’s ‘Danae’ or Titian’s mythological pictures to become aware of the fact that in the Italian High Renaissance the visual language of classical art had regained the status of an idiom in which new poems could be written.¹¹⁵⁰

The ‘principle of disjunction’ provided the material elucidation of Panofsky’s theory of the Renaissance. And in *Renaissance and Resuscitations in Western Art* he illustrated his theory with numerous examples.¹¹⁵¹ In this sense the book was a tour de force of iconological explication. Panofsky was demonstrating how an understanding of artistic and visual media could provide important, perhaps even unique, insights into historical, human development and the history of ideas. And, in doing so, he sought to affirm and demonstrate the place of art history within a wider understanding of the historical, humanistic disciplines.

Renaissance and Resuscitations in Western Art was a significant book for Panofsky in one other regard. The more ‘rationalised’ and ‘critical’ conception of history that he discerned in the Renaissance provided him with a kind of intellectual paradigm for exactly those scholarly principles that he thought it important to expound in the United States. In Panofsky’s understanding the humanists of the Renaissance had had to first conceptualise a certain ‘historical distance’ in order to understand the classical past ‘on its own terms’. Indeed, their historical consciousness had been predicated upon a fundamental acknowledgement of their own distance from, or difference to, their object of interest/study. As Panofsky suggested in his methodological essay of 1938, it was upon such self-consciousness, such self-reflection, that the *discipline* of history was founded. In contrast to the “naïve beholder”, Panofsky wrote in *The History of Art as a Humanistic Discipline*, it is the *humanist historian*,

¹¹⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, p100.

¹¹⁵¹ *Ibid.*, p82-113.

...who knows that his cultural equipment, such as it is, would not be in harmony with that of people in another land and of a different period. He tries, therefore, to make adjustments by learning as much as he possibly can of the circumstances under which the objects of his study were created.¹¹⁵²

As Panofsky had proposed in his essay on Vasari, the “humanistic *geschichtskonstruktion*” was a precursor of Kantian ‘critical’ disinterestedness, and, as such, it provided an intellectual antecedent for his own “humanistic” conception of historical discipline. Panofsky was not, of course, suggesting that the Renaissance did requisite historical justice to the past; but he was serious about connecting his own historical project to that of the fifteenth-century.¹¹⁵³ Indeed, in *Renaissance and Renascences in Western Art* Panofsky drew specific attention to the fact that it was during the Renaissance that the modern disciplines of history, philology and archaeology first took shape. Again, this was a development considered characteristic of that particular ‘Renaissance’ physiognomy:

Since the Renaissance the Antique has been constantly with us, whether we like it or not. It lives in our mathematics and natural sciences. It has built our theatres and cinemas as opposed to the medieval mystery stage. It haunts the speech of our cab driver – not to mention the motor mechanic or radio expert – as opposed to that of the medieval peasant. And it is firmly entrenched behind the thin but thus far unbroken glass walls of history, philology and archaeology. The formation and, ultimately, formalization of these three disciplines – foreign to the Middle Ages in spite of all the Carolingian and twelfth-century ‘humanists’ – evince a fundamental difference between the medieval and the modern attitude towards classical antiquity, a difference which makes us understand the essential strength and the essential weakness of both. In the Italian Renaissance the classical past began to be looked upon from a fixed distance, quite comparable to the ‘distance between the eye and the object’ in that most characteristic invention of this very Renaissance, focussed perspective. As in focused perspective, this distance prohibited direct contact...but permitted a total and rationalised view. Such a distance is absent from the medieval renascences.¹¹⁵⁴

Just as the humanists of the Renaissance were confronted with a new understanding of themselves through their conscious efforts to ‘re-enliven’ the classical world, so too was the ‘modern’ (humanistic) historian faced with his own subjectivity whenever he attempted to ‘re-enliven’ the past.

There was certainly a lot at stake for Panofsky in the publication of *Renaissance and Renascences in Western Art*. In addition to providing a contribution to the complex and perennial debate

¹¹⁵² ‘The History of Art as a Humanistic Discipline’, *Meaning in the Visual Arts*, op. cit., p40.

¹¹⁵³ On this theme see, Landauer, *Erwin Panofsky and the Renaissance of the Renaissance*, op. cit., p273.

¹¹⁵⁴ *Renaissance and Renascences in Western Art*, p108.

surrounding ‘the originality of the Renaissance’, he wanted to demonstrate once and for all that the history of art was a significant and meaningful historical discipline. Furthermore, he wanted the book to provide an apology and a historical lineage for his conception of historical or ‘humanistic’ scholarship in general.

Perhaps understandably, the development of his Swedish lectures into a book-length publication caused Panofsky great difficulty and consternation. He proceeded in his usual manner, dictating hand-written scripts to his secretary, but there were added complications with this publication which made the process particularly arduous and time-consuming.¹¹⁵⁵ In putting together this lecture series at the last minute, Panofsky had been fully conscious that any subsequent publication would require further work.¹¹⁵⁶ Though he had originally estimated that this would take one year, the process took much longer.¹¹⁵⁷ Panofsky found it extremely difficult to keep on top of the tremendous amount of literature that was being issued on the ‘Renaissance problem’. As he wrote to Gregor Paulsson, his Swedish editor, four years after he first accepted the commission,

“I have not written you for a long time because I did not have much to report. Now I can tell you that the Gottesman book is now about half finished and typed, the work having been very slow not only because I am no longer young but also, and even more so, because of the unending stream of publications that have to be considered or at least mentioned.”¹¹⁵⁸

Panofsky’s letters show that he was also genuinely concerned that he would not be able to say anything worthwhile and original on such a vast and ‘popular’ topic:

“So much has been written about this problem that it is hardly possible to be original even at the price of being wrong: it seems that even all the wrong things have already been said by someone else.”¹¹⁵⁹

This anxiety became a common refrain during the years Panofsky laboured over *Renaissance and Renascences in Western Art*. As he grumbled to his friend Hans Kauffmann,

“It will be a very bad book, for as far as the Renaissance is concerned, even all the wrong things, not to mention the right ones, have already been said so that it is nearly impossible to be original even at the risk of being foolish.”¹¹⁶⁰

¹¹⁵⁵ Panofsky noted in his preface, “My special gratitude is due, as in the case of several previous publications, to my former research assistant, Mrs W.F. King, whose patience has been more severely tried by the preparation of this volume than on previous occasions.” *Ibid.*, pxix.

¹¹⁵⁶ Panofsky to Carl Nordenfalk, March 25th, 1952 (1533).

¹¹⁵⁷ Panofsky to Gregor Paulsson, March 25th, 1952 (1534).

¹¹⁵⁸ Panofsky to Gregor Paulsson, April 3rd, 1956 (1922a).

¹¹⁵⁹ Panofsky to Gian Orsini, November 15th, 1955 (1866).

It is clear from Panofsky's letters that he did not enjoy the process of writing up this particular book. He complained to Paul Oskar Kristeller of the "dreary task of converting my Swedish lectures on the Renaissance Problem into a kind of book, a task the difficulty of which you will appreciate more than anyone else."¹¹⁶¹ And in 1958 he despaired of the book,

*"[It] will be extremely bad, I am sorry to say, because it grew out of a series of lectures with the result that the freshness of oral delivery is lost while the drawbacks of a lecture (repetitiousness and scarcity of new contributions) have been preserved."*¹¹⁶²

Panofsky gave up all teaching and turned down many other professional commitments as he struggled to complete the Renaissance book.¹¹⁶³ As he told Alfred Neumeyer in 1955,

*"I have cancelled practically all of my lecturing commitments, including a graduate course at NYU, and need whatever I have left of energy to finish something which I have promised to the Swedes three years ago and have not as yet been able to deliver."*¹¹⁶⁴

Six months later he told William Heckscher,

*"I feel it my duty not to undertake anything in the way of new experiences or new research until the damned Swedish book is finished, which, I am sorry to say, will be the worst I have ever written."*¹¹⁶⁵

As deadline after deadline passed by, the inordinate delays became a source of great unease and embarrassment for Panofsky,¹¹⁶⁶ and in the end he came to resent the obligation. In 1955 he informed his close friend Edward Lowinsky,

*"I feel tied down to those Swedish lectures like Andromeda to her rock and should actually welcome the dragon in case no Perseus is available."*¹¹⁶⁷

And when Panofsky was asked by Ludwig Heydenreich to review the latest edition of *Dürer's Literary Remains*, he declined, stating that he was too busy with,

¹¹⁶⁰ Panofsky to Kauffmann, January 6th, 1958 (2155). See also, Panofsky to Paul Oskar Kristeller, January 4th, 1956 (AAA).

¹¹⁶¹ Panofsky to Kristeller, January 4th, 1956 (AAA).

¹¹⁶² Panofsky to H.B. Jessen, April 10th, 1958 (2192).

¹¹⁶³ See Panofsky to Craig Hugh Smyth, June 5th, 1953 (1622), & Panofsky to Theodor E. Mommsen, February 20th, 1957 (AAA).

¹¹⁶⁴ Panofsky to Neumeyer, November 14th, 1955 (1865).

¹¹⁶⁵ Panofsky to Heckscher, April 25th, 1956 (1940).

¹¹⁶⁶ See, Panofsky to Åke Holmbäck, October 25th, 1954 (1717) & Panofsky to Gregor Paulsson, April 3rd, 1956 (1922a). Panofsky was particularly contrite about the fact that David Samuel Gottesman, having died in 1956, did not live to see the book's publication – Panofsky to Gregor Paulsson, April 13th, 1960 (2486).

¹¹⁶⁷ Panofsky to Edward Lowinsky, November 2nd, 1955 (1858).

“...an extremely frustrating attempt to make a book out of those lectures which I delivered in Sweden three years ago, an obligation that hangs around my neck like the proverbial dead chicken around the neck of the disobedient bird dog.”¹¹⁶⁸

Altogether, *Renaissance and Renascences in Western Art* took up eight years of Panofsky's life, and when it was eventually published in 1960 he acknowledged “the somewhat embarrassing result that it appeared on the centenary of Burckhardt's immortal work.”¹¹⁶⁹ Even allowing for Panofsky's characteristic self-deprecation, his letters do suggest that he was particularly dissatisfied with the final form of this book. He described “the unfortunate Swedish book” to Theodor Mommsen as “both unsound and boring”¹¹⁷⁰; and he informed Millard Meiss that he would be one of the very few unfortunates upon whom the “awful Swedish book” would be “inflicted”.¹¹⁷¹ Writing to his old friend Margaret Barr of the impending publication, Panofsky went even further stating,

“It is, in my considered opinion, one of the worst books ever written and should receive a prize from the Medieval Academy if there was such a thing as a scholastic equivalent of the prize formerly awarded to ‘the ugliest woman in New York’.”¹¹⁷²

Part of Panofsky's dissatisfaction stemmed from the fact that this book was only really ever half-finished. The eventual publication comprised the material of only four of the ten lectures Panofsky provided at Gripsholm Castle.¹¹⁷³ In Sweden Panofsky had lectured on the High Renaissance, on artists such as Leonardo and Dürer, and on the relation of the arts and the sciences during the period. He had originally intended to include all of this material in one comprehensive textbook, but due to the inordinate amount of time it took to write up the first sections, these later chapters were shelved.¹¹⁷⁴ Consequently, Panofsky referred to *Renaissance and Renascences in Western Art* as a “fragment.”¹¹⁷⁵

We can gain some insight into the material Panofsky omitted from his *Renaissance* book from another of his essays published the same year he delivered the Gottesman lectures: *Artist, Scientist, Genius: Notes on the ‘Renaissance-Dämmerung’*.¹¹⁷⁶ This lesser-known work originated as a lecture

¹¹⁶⁸ Panofsky to Heydenreich, October 23rd, 1956 (1996).

¹¹⁶⁹ Panofsky to Krautheimer, September 26th, 1960 (AAA).

¹¹⁷⁰ Panofsky to Mommsen, February 20th, 1957 (AAA).

¹¹⁷¹ Panofsky to Meiss, April 18th, 1960 (2490).

¹¹⁷² Panofsky to Margaret Barr, April 14th, 1960 (2487).

¹¹⁷³ The schedule for Panofsky's ‘Swedish Lectures’ is contained in a letter to Gregor Paulsson, March 25th, 1952 (1534).

¹¹⁷⁴ Even in 1954, over two full years after Panofsky had delivered his lectures in Sweden, he thought that Leonardo would play a central role in his book. See Panofsky to André Chastel, November 4th, 1954 (1720).

¹¹⁷⁵ Panofsky describes the difficulties *Renaissance and Renascences in Western Art* caused him in his in his ‘Author's Preface’, p xviii.

¹¹⁷⁶ E. Panofsky, ‘Artist, Scientist, Genius: Notes on the ‘Renaissance-Dämmerung’’, in *The Renaissance: Six Essays*, W.K. Ferguson et al., 1962 (1953), pp121-182.

given at a 'Renaissance' symposium in New York. Panofsky went on to deliver this presentation on numerous occasions throughout the 1950s,¹¹⁷⁷ and he often referred to it in the context of his Swedish lectures.¹¹⁷⁸ The essay should be understood as a kind of pendant to Panofsky's 1960 publication *Renaissance and Resuscitations in Western Art*.

Artist, Scientist, Genius was part of Panofsky's attempt to defend and define the idea of 'The Renaissance'.¹¹⁷⁹ However, it was also conceived of as a much more direct and concerted response to those historians of medieval science who, while ceding that the Renaissance may have constituted "a magnificent climax in the arts", claimed that the period "represented an 'anti-climax between two peaks' in the sciences."¹¹⁸⁰ The main thrust of Panofsky's retort centred upon the fact that during the Renaissance the 'arts' and the 'sciences' had become fused and unified in the activities of individuals such as Leonardo and Albrecht Dürer. Eschewing workshop traditions and conventions, these artists looked afresh at the natural world, transcribing in exacting detail their direct observations from nature. Inspired too by classical precedent, they studied human anatomy, human movement, and the processes inherent in human vision itself; describing their observations in scientific treatises on human proportions and linear perspective.¹¹⁸¹ This was a newly systematic and *rationalised* approach to understanding the physical world, one that sought to comprehend nature according to its own principles of formation; that is, as opposed to through the lens of received wisdom or religious dogma.

In *Artist, Scientist, Genius* Panofsky sought to demonstrate that Renaissance artists had thus contributed significantly to the development of a 'modern' 'scientific' worldview:

Much of that which was later to be isolated as 'natural science' came into being in artists' studios. And...the rise of those particular branches of natural science which may be called observational or descriptive – zoology, botany, palaeontology, several aspects of physics and, first and foremost, anatomy – was so directly predicated upon the rise of the representational techniques that we should think twice before admitting that the Renaissance achieved great things in art while contributing little to the progress of science.¹¹⁸²

¹¹⁷⁷ Panofsky gave this lecture at a Harvard conference on 'The Renaissance' in May 1952, and then again in July of the same year at the 17th International Congress of Art History in Amsterdam.

¹¹⁷⁸ See Panofsky to Kate Steinitz, November 3rd, 1952 (1564), & Panofsky to Mommsen, July 2nd, 1953 (1630).

¹¹⁷⁹ *Artist, Scientist, Genius*, p123-126.

¹¹⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, p126-7.

¹¹⁸¹ In the 1950s Panofsky lectured on such subjects as 'Leonardo as a Student of Human Anatomy, Proportion and Movement' (Panofsky to the New York Renaissance Club, March 18th, 1952 (AAA)), and 'Leonardo as an Anatomist and Theorist of Proportions' (Panofsky to Adolph Katzenellenbogen, February 12th, 1954 (1676)).

¹¹⁸² *Artist, Scientist, Genius*, p140.

Once again for Panofsky, the invention of linear perspective during the Renaissance was of particular 'symbolic' import. As he wrote in *Artist, Scientist, Genius*,

The requirement of 'perspective'...makes us see in a flash that anatomy as a science (and this applies to all the other observational or descriptive disciplines) was simply not possible without a method of preserving observations in graphic records, complete and accurate in three dimensions. In the absence of such records even the best observation was lost because it was not possible to check it against others and thus to test its general validity. It is no exaggeration to say that in the history of modern science the advent of perspective marked the beginning of a first period; the invention of the microscope that of a second; and the discovery of photography that of a third: in the observational or descriptive sciences illustration is not so much the elucidation of a statement as a statement in itself.¹¹⁸³

In suggesting that the Renaissance engendered the birth of a modern 'scientific' worldview, Panofsky was providing a firm riposte to those 'revolting medievalists' who sought to minimise the significance of the period. In doing so, he was, once again, aligning his work with that of his erstwhile Hamburg colleague Ernst Cassirer,¹¹⁸⁴ and that Burckhardtian tradition according to which the Renaissance was envisaged as 'the discovery of the world and of man.'

Ultimately in *Artist, Scientist, Genius* Panofsky looked back upon the Renaissance with some nostalgia.¹¹⁸⁵ This was a period in which the arts and the sciences had walked hand-in-hand, and had been conceived of together, in a 'humanistic' sense, as complimentary means of finding (and forming) meaning from the experience of reality. And in this way again, the Renaissance served as a kind of intellectual paradigm for Panofsky. During the Renaissance the 'humanistic' disciplines had enjoyed equivalence with the 'scientific' disciplines, and this was, of course, a theme which concerned Panofsky greatly throughout his American career:

[T]he fact remains that what had been a unity in the Renaissance is now, again, a complex diversity; and there are those who were not, are not, and will never be satisfied with this state of affairs. There is a type of mind, and not necessarily of an inferior order, which finds it impossible to accept the sum of parts as a substitute for

¹¹⁸³ *Ibid.*, p147. Panofsky alluded to the curious analogy between the new conception of space developed during the Renaissance and a 'modern' *Weltanschauung* in many of his publications. See, for example, *Renaissance and Renascences in Western Art*, p108. In *Albrecht Dürer too*, Panofsky referred to "a curious inward correspondence between perspective and what may be called the general mental attitude of the Renaissance." *op. cit.*, p261. In 1958 Panofsky told Karl Lehmann that the problem of perspective would come up in *Renaissance and Renascences*, "...as is its wont in everything I write." Panofsky to Karl Lehmann, November 6th, 1958 (2260).

¹¹⁸⁴ See Cassirer's *The Individual and the Cosmos* *op. cit.*, pp151-160.

¹¹⁸⁵ *Artist, Scientist, Genius*, p181.

the whole, the quantitative as a substitute for the qualitative, a series of equations as a substitute for significance.¹¹⁸⁶

Panofsky ended *Artist, Scientist, Genius* with a quotation from his friend Wolfgang Pauli:

Though we now have natural sciences, we no longer have a total scientific picture of the world. Since the discovery of the quantum of action, physics has gradually been forced to relinquish its proud claim to be able to understand, in principle, the whole world. This very circumstance, however, as a correction of earlier one-sidedness, could contain the germ of progress toward a unified conception of the entire cosmos of which the natural sciences are only a part."¹¹⁸⁷

Although this significant material had to be omitted from *Renaissance and Resuscitations in Western Art*, when the book was eventually published it was universally well-received. Indeed, many of the earliest reviewers voiced their hope that Panofsky would soon publish the material from the second lot of his Swedish lectures.¹¹⁸⁸ In 1961 *Renaissance and Resuscitations in Western Art* was awarded the CAA's 'Charles Rufus Morey Award' for 'The outstanding work of scholarship in the History of Art by an American author in the year 1960'.¹¹⁸⁹ Panofsky was initially dubious about accepting this honour because he was aware that Paul Oskar Kristeller (widely acknowledged by this point as *the* leading scholar in Renaissance studies) was due to publish his review of *Renaissance and Resuscitations* in the *Art Bulletin*, and a review Panofsky expected to be critical. On being notified of the CAA honour, Panofsky replied to the President of the Association,

*"Is it not very risky for the Committee on the Charles Rufus Morey Award to act before the book in question has been reviewed in the Art Bulletin? I have every reason to believe that this review will be fairly critical (and rightly so) and then the College Art Association will find itself involved in an amusing self-contradiction."*¹¹⁹⁰

Panofsky need not have worried. Kristeller pointed out a few misprints and quibbled with "other minutiae", but ultimately he provided an extremely affirmative review of the work, declaring himself to be in agreement with Panofsky's "general attitude." Indeed, Kristeller spoke for many when he wrote of *Renaissance and Resuscitations in Western Art*,

¹¹⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, p181.

¹¹⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, p182.

¹¹⁸⁸ See, for example, George Kubler, 'Disjunction and Mutational Energy: *Renaissance and Resuscitations in Western Art*', *ArtNews*, 60:1, February 1961, p34 & p55; p55 & W. Stechow, 'Review of *Renaissance and Resuscitations in Western Art*', *Renaissance News*, 14:2, summer 1961, p111-113; p112.

¹¹⁸⁹ See David M. Robb, to Panofsky, September 21st, 1961 (2729).

¹¹⁹⁰ Panofsky to David M. Robb, September 22nd, 1961 (2731).

The work is distinguished throughout by a great density of content and felicity of expression. The mastery of both the relevant artistic monuments and of the literary documents is stupendous.¹¹⁹¹

One would imagine that Panofsky would have been particularly gratified by Kristeller's closing paragraph:

Among the historians of art, Panofsky is the most authoritative scholar who conceives of his subject as a part and facet of the broader field of intellectual and cultural history, and who thus also instructs and inspires through his work those who are interested in other aspects of cultural history. For he conceives of the visual arts as part of a universe of culture that also comprises the sciences, the philosophical and religious thought, the literature and scholarship of the Western world in the various phases of its history. This is the kind of 'true humanism' of which we are badly in need, and in spite of our present grim outlook, there is some hope for the future of our civilization as long as its cause is being upheld by scholars of Panofsky's caliber.¹¹⁹²

Panofsky does seem to have been taken aback by the overwhelmingly favourable reaction to *Renaissance and Renascences in Western Art*. As he informed Allan Ellenius, his Swedish editor,

*"Much to my surprise the book has received several favourable reviews outside Sweden, even in two English periodicals which are normally not conspicuous for charitableness, the Times Literary Supplement and the Burlington Magazine."*¹¹⁹³

On the back of such overwhelming approbation Panofsky even began to re-evaluate the extent of his achievement in publishing this book. When Wolfgang Stechow asked if Panofsky had read his review, Panofsky replied,

*"Yes, I have read your review of my Ren. and Ren. book and find it, needless to say, much too favorable. In your case this may be partly explained by our old friendship; but I am surprised that other reviews also seem to be quite lenient, even that in the proverbially acrid Literary Times Supplement. So I begin to feel that the book is perhaps not quite so bad as I thought: one is always a bad judge of one's own performances."*¹¹⁹⁴

¹¹⁹¹ P.O. Kristeller, 'Review of *Renaissance and Renascences in Western Art*', in *The Art Bulletin*, 44:1, March 1962, pp65-67; p66.

¹¹⁹² *Ibid.*, p67. For Panofsky's appreciation of Kristeller's review, see Panofsky to Kristeller, October 6th, 1961 (AAA).

¹¹⁹³ Panofsky to Allan Ellenius, April 13th, 1961 (2641). Panofsky here refers to the review by C.R. Dodwell in *The Burlington Magazine*, 103, 1961, p113; and an anonymous review entitled, 'Form and Context. Erwin Panofsky: *Renaissance and Renascences in Western Art*', in *The Times Literary Supplement*, Friday, February 10th, 1961, p84.

¹¹⁹⁴ Panofsky to Wolfgang Stechow, July 18th, 1961 (2693).

There should be no doubt that *Renaissance and Resuscitations in Western Art* was a considerable achievement. One particular notable quality of the book is the judicious assessment Panofsky provides for each of the medieval ‘resuscitations’. Eschewing the polemical rhetoric of the ‘revolting medievalists’, Panofsky instead provides learned and informative accounts of the “Carolingian *renovatio*”, and the “proto-Renaissance of the twelfth century”. Indeed, these sections of the book are considered by some commentators to be among Panofsky’s best work, and they provide a genuine contribution to medieval history.¹¹⁹⁵ Panofsky had, of course, published widely on medieval art throughout his career, and he was a member of the Medieval Academy of America.¹¹⁹⁶ No matter how much he endeavoured to delineate ‘The Renaissance’, Panofsky was no anti-medievalist. Indeed, Charles Trinkaus has noted that “[*Renaissance and Resuscitations in Western Art*] had a major influence in resolving the dissidence between medievalists and Renaissance scholars.”¹¹⁹⁷ This is borne out by the fact that in 1962 the book was awarded (somewhat ironically) the ‘Haskins Medal’ by the Medieval Academy of America.¹¹⁹⁸ As Panofsky wrote playfully to Kristeller soon after he’d heard of this award,

*“This was one of the greatest surprises of my life because I had expected to be expelled from this august body rather than to be honoured by it. The main purpose of the book was, after all, to fight what seems to be the prevailing opinion among medievalists; and that they responded with a medal shows that they are true Christians, turning, as it were, the other cheek.”*¹¹⁹⁹

Considered as a whole, *Renaissance and Resuscitations in Western Art* provides a fine illustration of Panofsky’s ‘American style’. The book is wide in scope and ambition, and yet it is informed throughout by detailed, sedulous research and pertinent illustrative examples. With his conscientious footnotes and his extensive review of the literature germane to his topic Panofsky situates his own ideas firmly in a historiographical context. The ‘Swedish book’ thus stands as a self-contained introduction to an involved, complex and perennial historical ‘problem’, at the same time as Panofsky’s original and distinctive ‘Renaissance’ thesis provides a genuine contribution to scholarship.¹²⁰⁰ This was a consummate example of ‘iconology in action’. Panofsky had

¹¹⁹⁵ N. Cantor, *Inventing the Middle Ages*, op. cit., p184.

¹¹⁹⁶ See, for example, E. Panofsky, *Die deutsche Plastik des elften bis dreizehnten Jahrhunderts*, 1924; *Abbot Suger on the Abbey Church of St-Denis and Its Art Treasures*, 1946; and *Gothic Architecture and Scholasticism*, 1951. See also *Idea: A Concept in Art Theory*, 1960 (1924), especially chapter 3, pp33-43.

¹¹⁹⁷ C. Trinkaus, ‘Renaissance Ideas and the Idea of the Renaissance’, *Journal of the History of Ideas*, 51:4, October-December 1990, pp667-684; p683, n.18.

¹¹⁹⁸ See, ‘Proceedings of the Annual Meeting of the Medieval Academy of America’, *Speculum*, 37:3, July, 1962, pp473-500; p473.

¹¹⁹⁹ Panofsky to Kristeller, April 16th, 1962 (AAA).

¹²⁰⁰ This is not to say, of course, that Panofsky’s thesis remains unchallenged. See, for example, Randolph Starn, *Who’s Afraid of the Renaissance?*, op. cit., p138.

demonstrated what the history of art as a humanistic discipline could mean, and moreover, as was Panofsky's want, the book remained eminently accessible, readable, and digestible. Many readers of the book today (at least those who may skip past the author's Preface) would surely be surprised by the anxiety and difficulty it caused Panofsky, and the fact that he considered it a mere "fragment". Although Panofsky long agonised over its publication, *Renaissance and Renascences in Western Art* set high standards for the history of art written in the English language.

6. Reflection

Old age and a change of pace

Renaissance and Renascences proved an arduous undertaking, long in the making, and its publication marked something of a watershed moment in Panofsky's career. Soon after the majority of work on this book was completed, he informed William Heckscher,

*"I [have] accomplished most of what I wanted to accomplish, but am now a little bit exhausted and we have both been labouring under all sorts of illnesses, minor in my case, major in Dora's. Still we hope for another year."*¹²⁰¹

The year after *Renaissance and Renascences* was published Panofsky retired from the Institute for Advanced Study; he was 70 years old. The completion of the Swedish book signalled a quite self-conscious slowing down in the aging scholar's professional life. When the book finally went to press he informed one correspondent,

*"For the last twenty years I have been living with deadlines hanging around my neck like the dead chicken around that of the recalcitrant setter dog, and have finally reached the point where I can devote myself to writing according to my own time schedule."*¹²⁰²

During the remainder of his career Panofsky certainly did not issue any more publications of the scale and ambition that had characterised *Renaissance and Renascences*, *Early Netherlandish Painting* or his *Dürer*. He made numerous contributions to journals and Festschriften but did not publish any more large-scale, 'fundamental' textbooks.¹²⁰³ Indeed, shortly after *Renaissance and Renascences* was written up in its final form, Panofsky informed Herbert Weisinger,

¹²⁰¹ Panofsky to William Heckscher, April 1st, 1958 (2188). Similarly, soon after *Renaissance and Renascences in Western Art* was completed Panofsky informed Paul Coremans, "I have just finished about everything I planned to finish in this life." Panofsky to Paul Coremans, April 13th, 1960 (2485).

¹²⁰² Panofsky to Gyorgy Kepes, November 11th, 1958 (2264).

¹²⁰³ In 1961 Panofsky published *The Iconography of Correggio's Camera di San Paolo*, a short study of a particular iconographic puzzle. For the émigré scholar's many other shorter-scale essays see Bibliography. *Problems in Titian: Mostly Iconographic*, Panofsky's last book-length publication, was published posthumously, in 1969. This book developed from a series of lectures delivered by Panofsky at NYU in 1963. These lectures were recorded on tape and then typed up verbatim by Panofsky's secretary. The one other book-length publication issued under Panofsky's name after *Renaissance and Renascences* was *Tomb Sculpture: Four Lectures on its Changing Aspects from Ancient Egypt to Bernini* (1964). However, this book was brought to completion by close friends and colleagues (most particularly Horst Janson). Panofsky had lost his notes for the publication in a hotel fire, and didn't have the energy to finish it.

*"[I am] getting rather old and...have given up all ambitions to generalization and have returned, as it were, to the more pedestrian task of solving iconographical crossword puzzles...With this, I think, I shall be satisfied for the rest of my life."*¹²⁰⁴

In the 1960s Panofsky, and perhaps even more especially his wife Dora, became increasingly susceptible to the encumbering effects of old age. Dora Panofsky, eight years her husband's senior, had a long history of serious illness,¹²⁰⁵ and her health had been the cause of great concern since the late forties.¹²⁰⁶ From the early sixties onwards Panofsky regularly turned down lecture invitations, and indeed any other commitments, because he didn't want to be away from the family home overnight.¹²⁰⁷ Panofsky's own health also became increasingly unreliable as he reached his seventies, and upon his doctor's advice he curtailed his professional activities significantly.¹²⁰⁸

Upon his retirement from active Faculty duty at the IAS Panofsky was, almost immediately, offered the Samuel F.B. Morse Professorship at NYU's Institute of Fine Arts.¹²⁰⁹ The émigré scholar had, of course, a long professional relationship with this particular institution, and many of his friends there – both established colleagues and former-students-turned-scholars – were keen to have him return in an official capacity.¹²¹⁰ Craig Hugh Smyth, Director of the IFA, reinstated the Morse Chair expressly for Panofsky in 1962. It was a handsomely paid role but held little in the way of teaching obligations or administrative expectations.¹²¹¹ Indeed, Smyth and the IFA went out of their way to make the Morse Chair an attractive proposition for Panofsky. The Institute stood to benefit from continued association with this most eminent art historian of course; but, more than this, the Morse Professorship was in many respects due reward for Panofsky's long-standing association with the IFA. Panofsky accepted the role with little hesitation, but he well appreciated the kindness and

¹²⁰⁴ Panofsky to Herbert Weisinger, June 2nd, 1959 (2363).

¹²⁰⁵ Dora Panofsky had two major operations during the 40s, one to remove an abscess from her kidney from which she nearly died. In 1958 Dora contracted pneumonia and this too proved nearly fatal. Such was the concern with Dora's health at this time that a lengthy essay written jointly by the pair ('The Iconography of the Galerie François 1er at Fontainebleau') was rushed through the press. Dora survived this scare, but her health continued to deteriorate. In 1958 she lost the sight in one eye, and a few years later she developed a serious heart condition, a condition complicated further by high blood pressure. Dora also seems to have suffered from some form of depression. See, for example, Panofsky to Heckscher, May 14th, 1962 (AAA).

¹²⁰⁶ Informing Fritz Saxl of that he had been diagnosed with a stomach ulcer, Panofsky wrote, "I got it apparently because of all the psychological disturbances connected with Dora's more serious illness; other people get it because they own stocks that go up and down." Panofsky to Fritz Saxl, April 1st, 1947(1188, n3).

¹²⁰⁷ Panofsky to Giulio Carlo Argan, December 5th, 1961 (2769), & Panofsky to Markus Fierz, May 15th, 1961 (1663).

¹²⁰⁸ Panofsky to Thomas L. Reed, May 16th, 1955 (AAA), & Panofsky to Ruth C. Lawson, July 15th, 1958 (AAA). See also, Panofsky to George H. Forsyth, October 26th, 1959 (2397).

¹²⁰⁹ C.H. Smyth to Panofsky, December 6th, 1961 (AAA).

¹²¹⁰ Panofsky described himself to Craig Hugh Smyth, Director of NYU's IFA, as "a kind of godfather to your outfit." Panofsky to Smyth, March 11th, 1959 (2323).

¹²¹¹ See Panofsky to Harry Bober, December 11th, 1961 (2776).

generosity of the offer.¹²¹² He was particularly appreciative of the fact that his new post would provide financial security for himself and Dora, and a certain level of stability and continuity in their old age. As Panofsky related to his close friend Hugo Buchthal,



9. Panofsky in the late 1960s.

“The [IAS] retirement allowance is so minimal that one has to change one’s whole style of living: one has to rent or sell the house, dismiss one’s faithful colored servants and go to whichever place is prepared to offer shelter to a more or less dilapidated emeritus. In our case this...will be prevented by what I consider one of the nicest things that has ever happened to us in our lives. The young people at the Institute of Fine Arts in New York have arranged, behind my back, the establishment of a Samuel F.B. Morse Visiting Professorship...This Professorship entails a minimum of work (only one seminar every second term and two or three public lectures per annum) and if its incumbent happens to live in Princeton he can more or less go on

as he did before. I know full well that this ‘Professorship’ is not really needed and was, so to speak, made to order in our behalf; but this fills me, very naturally, with gratitude as well as a certain amount of relief.”¹²¹³

In the later period of his life Panofsky became very much mindful of his advancing years and the effects of old age. William Heckscher has noted that, “Old age and death were much-dreaded enemies to Panofsky. Towards the end of his life he circled them restlessly in his own mind.”¹²¹⁴ Heckscher’s statement is corroborated by a reading of Panofsky’s later letters. The aging scholar was, for example, ever mindful of those close friends and contemporaries suffering serious health problems and dying, and as early as 1956 he pointed out to William Heckscher that “the mortality

¹²¹² Panofsky wrote to Craig Hugh Smyth, “That your kindness enables me to [work] under extremely favourable conditions is a thing for which I shall always be grateful.” Panofsky to C.H. Smyth, December 8th, 1961 (2774).

¹²¹³ Panofsky to Hugo Buchthal, December 20th, 1961 (2784). See also, Panofsky to Richard Krautheimer, December 18th, 1961 (2780).

¹²¹⁴ Heckscher, *Erwin Panofsky: A Curriculum Vitae*, op. cit., p20.

rate of humanists increases at an alarming speed.”¹²¹⁵ Such losses seem always to have stimulated a real sense of reflection and introspection for Panofsky in regards his own age, prospects and capabilities. As he wrote to Heckscher of the death of Paul Frankl, a long-term émigré colleague at the IAS,

*“In a sense I envy him because he was working on, I believe, four or five different books up to an hour before the final attack and was spared the slow deterioration which most of us have to face.”*¹²¹⁶

Ever conscious of his own mortality, many of Panofsky’s later letters are imbued with a certain despondency and pessimism. In October 1964, for example, he admitted to his close friend Wolfgang Stechow of himself and Dora, “We are getting terribly old but are not quite so courageous about it as might be wished.”¹²¹⁷ Only three months later he would inform Heckscher “we are both at a pretty low ebb, what with the snow, the flu and general discouragement.”¹²¹⁸ When Ernst Kantorowicz died in 1964 Wolfgang Stechow received the rather doleful and pitiable entreaty:

*“We have not heard from each other for a long time. How are you and how is Ursula? We really should like to know how things are with you and your family because we like to remain in touch with our surviving contemporaries, the number of which has been so sadly diminished by the death of Kantorowicz.”*¹²¹⁹

In spite, or perhaps because of their age and their increasingly unreliable health, Erwin and Dora Panofsky made one last journey to Europe together in 1965. Panofsky had agreed to receive an honorary doctorate from the University of Rome in person, and he and Dora made plans to travel from Rome on to Naples, Venice and Madrid.¹²²⁰ This extended trip was obviously envisioned by the couple as a European swansong, with Panofsky describing the Rome doctorate as,

*“...one of the greatest honours that can be bestowed upon any scholar in the civilised universe...It would be the most splendid finale of a scholastic career.”*¹²²¹

In the lead up to their departure, Panofsky also admitted to one friend that both he and Dora were “still in rather bad shape...(We) prepare for a last trip to Europe, in the full knowledge that it may

¹²¹⁵ Panofsky to William Heckscher, Apr 25th, 1956 (1940). This letter was occasioned by the death of the philologist Ernst Robert Curtius. Charles Rufus Morey and Albert Einstein, two of Panofsky’s oldest friends in Princeton, had died the previous year.

¹²¹⁶ Panofsky to William Heckscher, February 9th, 1962 (AAA).

¹²¹⁷ Panofsky to Wolfgang Stechow, October 12th, 1964 (AAA).

¹²¹⁸ Panofsky to William Heckscher, January 22nd, 1965 (AAA). For this pessimistic outlook see also, Panofsky to Horst W. Janson, June 14th, 1963 (AAA).

¹²¹⁹ Panofsky to Wolfgang Stechow, February 26th, 1964 (AAA).

¹²²⁰ Panofsky travelled to these cities to view the works of Titian, in preparation for a lecture series at NYU. See, Panofsky to J. Robert Oppenheimer, April 3rd, 1963 (AAA), & Panofsky to Mirella Levi D’Ancona, May 3rd, 1963 (AAA).

¹²²¹ Panofsky to Giulio Carlo Argan, December 5th, 1961 (2769).

have to be abandoned at the last minute.”¹²²² When he and Dora eventually returned “exhausted”, Panofsky was forced to concede, “We realised with sadness that we are too old for European travel; not that we regret having undertaken the trip; but we are very much afraid that it has been our last.”¹²²³ Erwin and Dora Panofsky would make one last major journey together in the summer of 1964, travelling to the west coast of America for the first time to visit their son Wolfgang and his family. This too proved a rather strenuous undertaking, and upon their return to Princeton Dora was largely housebound. In the summer of 1965 she developed pneumonia. Following a subsequent bout of bronchitis that October, Dora died, aged 81.

The American Panofsky

In his old age Panofsky became increasingly self-reflective, perhaps most particularly in regards to his life and his legacy in the United States. Even into the 1960s, he felt himself involved in the perennial struggle to justify and validate the history of art as a serious academic discipline. Indeed, Panofsky’s concerns in this regard would sour and eventually end his relationship with the College Art Association, the largest professional body for the discipline in America. As a Director, Panofsky had long believed that the scholarly integrity of the CAA was compromised through the Association’s seemingly endless efforts to expand its purview and remit. In 1952, for example, he declared himself staunchly opposed to plans to merge the CAA’s College Art Journal with the more ‘popular’ Magazine of Art. As Panofsky informed the President of the Association,

*“I feel that we have a sufficient amount of conflicting tendencies within our organisation even as it is. The merger...would bring in entirely new groups of subscribers practicing artists, art dealers, and art critics – who have no relation with academic life even in its more primitive aspects.”*¹²²⁴

When plans were mooted in 1958 to increase the revenue of the CAA by opening up its membership even wider, Panofsky was aghast. He wrote immediately to the new President Charles P. Parkhurst Jr. detailing his objections:

“It would change the CAA in such a way that serious scholars would find themselves in an even more helpless minority than they already are...I feel that the CAA has reached a crisis on the outcome of which its whole future depends. It has a choice between remaining a learned society and becoming a kind of cross-breed between

¹²²² Panofsky to Ed Lowinsky, April 16th, 1963 (AAA).

¹²²³ Panofsky to Mirella Levi D’Ancona, June 18th, 1963 (AAA).

¹²²⁴ Panofsky to S. Laine Faison, October 8th, 1952 (1558).

trade union and big business enterprise...depending on a membership about as large and heterogeneous as the Book of the Month Club."¹²²⁵

On a more personal level Panofsky confided to his close friend Richard Krautheimer,

*"You and I are the about the only directors interested in the history of art rather than administration, education, appreciation, creation and other inventions of the devil."*¹²²⁶

When Krautheimer suggested they both resign in protest, Panofsky replied, "In this country, as I learned from one of my oldest and most experienced colleagues, one never resigns because this only pleases those whom the resignation is supposed to upset."¹²²⁷

Only a couple of years later however, Panofsky had lost the energy for this particular fight. He resigned his CAA Directorship in 1959, because, as he stated to the Association President,

*"Its main interests seem to have swerved from the promotion of studies in the history of art and criticism of art as an academic discipline towards a much wider field in which I cannot claim to have either competence or interest."*¹²²⁸

The next year Panofsky expressed his disillusionment to Mirella Levi D'Ancona in more unequivocal terms. When this former student wrote to ask for advice on how to deal with those of her colleagues at the State University of New York who believed "historical methods are wrong and old-fashioned", Panofsky replied,

*"Needless to say, I share your misgivings about the gradual displacement of historical methods by appreciation, intuition and all that kind of nonsense; but I am unfortunately unable to do anything about it. It was, in fact, merely because these diabolical tendencies began to get hold of the College Art Association that I resigned from its Board of Directors."*¹²²⁹

Thus, such concerns remained with Panofsky late into life. However, it must be pointed out that the émigré scholar was, by and large, generally contented with the life and career he had carved out in America. Living in the United States Panofsky had been able to establish an international reputation, and in the 1960s he continued to earn accolades and recognition from institutions and organisations, both in America and on the continent.¹²³⁰ Although Panofsky remained troubled by the less-than-

¹²²⁵ Panofsky to Charles P. Parkhurst, January 21st, 1958 (2160).

¹²²⁶ Panofsky to Krautheimer, October 15th, 1957 (AAA).

¹²²⁷ Ibid.

¹²²⁸ Panofsky to Charles P. Parkhurst Jr, April 9th, 1959 (2349).

¹²²⁹ Mirella Levi D'Ancona to Panofsky, December 10th, 1959 (AAA), & Panofsky to Mirella Levi D'Ancona, October 7th, 1960 (2539).

¹²³⁰ When he retired from the IAS Panofsky was again offered a Professorship at Harvard. Comfortably ensconced at the IFA, this was an offer Panofsky turned down once again. See Panofsky to John P. Coolidge,

historical elements that he believed continued to taint art scholarship in America, the country had become the de facto international centre of art-historical practice, and there is no doubt that Panofsky was widely regarded as the discipline's foremost representative. It was both fitting and symbolic therefore, that it was Panofsky who provided the plenary lecture when the International Congress of Art History was held for the first time in America, in New York City in 1961.¹²³¹

In later life Panofsky even received 'official' recognition from the United States government. In 1961 both he and Dora were invited to the inauguration ceremony for the newly elected American President John F. Kennedy. Although unable to attend this event due to ill health, Panofsky did provide a contribution to a volume celebrating the new incumbency.¹²³² He received a letter from the President in return, thanking him for his communication and inviting comment on "possible contributions the National Government might make to the Arts in America."¹²³³ In 1966 Panofsky was then invited to the White House in person by the then First Lady, Mrs Lady Bird Johnson, to be honoured "for distinguished service to education in art."¹²³⁴ In recognition of this honour the aged scholar also received letters of congratulation from both his local Democratic Party representative¹²³⁵ and the Senator of New Jersey.¹²³⁶ Following the reception at the White House Panofsky was sent a letter of commendation from the Vice-President, Hubert Humphrey, suggesting how very satisfying it must be to "enrich the lives of young people with an appreciation of the visual arts."¹²³⁷ The émigré art historian would surely have raised a wry smile at the wording of this commendation. Nevertheless, such recognition would have signalled a welcome sea-change in American politics for a one-time 'Top Collaborator'. Indeed, such official approbation, not to

December 5th, 1961 (2770). Panofsky received honorary doctorates from NYU (1962), Columbia University (1963) and Philadelphia College of Art (1963). In international terms, Panofsky was particularly noted in Belgium for the work he had carried out with Paul Coremans on the Ghent Altarpiece, and for his seminal book on *Early Netherlandish Painting*. In 1954 a special edition of the *Bulletin des Musées Royaux des Beaux-Arts* was dedicated to Panofsky as a kind of Festschrift, with contributions by many friends and colleagues involved with the study of Netherlandish art. See 'Miscellanea Erwin Panofsky', *Bulletin des Musées Royaux des Beaux-Arts*, 4, 1955, pp1-229. The next year Panofsky was also elected to the British Academy. In the 1960s Panofsky received honorary doctorates from a number of different German universities (Berlin in 1962, & Bonn and Freiburg in 1967). Panofsky's *Festschrift* proper, a veritable 'who's who' of American and European art historians, is also a testament to his huge influence and reputation. See, *'De Artibus Opuscula XL': Essays in Honour of Erwin Panofsky*, Millard Meiss ed., (2 vols), 1961.

¹²³¹ Panofsky lectured on *The Iconography of Correggio's Camera di San Paolo*, at the behest of the Conference President, Millard Meiss.

¹²³² Panofsky to Kay Halle, February 8th, 1961 (2609).

¹²³³ John F. Kennedy to Panofsky, September 8th, 1961 (2718).

¹²³⁴ This presentation was made in connection with the 25th Anniversary of the National Gallery in Washington D.C. See, *Town Topics*, Thursday, March 24th, 1966, p1.

¹²³⁵ Frank Thompson Jr. to Panofsky, March 9th, 1966 (AAA).

¹²³⁶ Senator Clifford P. Case to Panofsky, March 7th, 1966 (AAA).

¹²³⁷ Hubert H. Humphries to Panofsky, April 1st, 1966 (AAA).

mention the prestige and celebrity that accompanied it, must have been exceedingly gratifying for an aging émigré who had always fully committed himself to American life.¹²³⁸

The humanist tradition

As an elder statesman for the discipline of art history Panofsky found that he himself became the subject of no-little historical interest in his later life.¹²³⁹ Whilst he acknowledged that this was but another consequence of his advancing years, he also admitted that he was “slightly embarrassed by the fact that I seem to have reached the stage of being commented upon instead of commenting.”¹²⁴⁰ Similarly, when one young student wrote for advice on a report concerning “The Thought and Writings of Erwin Panofsky” Panofsky noted that he was, “both flattered and somewhat embarrassed by having become an object of vivisection in a Yale graduate seminar.”¹²⁴¹

This historiographical attention was a natural by-product of Panofsky’s influence and repute. However, he always protested strongly when he found he had been represented as some great innovator or ground-breaker. Indeed, Panofsky was always quite insistent that he should, instead, be looked upon as a representative of an older, more venerable tradition of scholarship. In his response to the young Yale graduate student mentioned above, Panofsky pointed out,

*“I conceived and conceive of my job as that of an eclectic, trying to perpetuate, as far as humanly possible, all methods of approach developed at the turn of the nineteenth century and cannot claim to have contributed anything original as far as method is concerned.”*¹²⁴²

Only the next year, when he discovered he had been accredited as a scholar who had “opened new paths” in the humanities Panofsky protested to a close friend,

“This, quite honestly, is precisely what I have not done and never presumed to do. On the contrary, I always conceived of my function as that of one who tries to see to it that the old paths are not forgotten or permitted to become impassable by underbrush...Far from being a pioneer, I have tried to be an eclectic attempting to apply as many of the accepted methods as can be comfortably handled by a single individual. The real pioneers were people like Riegl, Wölfflin, Warburg and Vöge –

¹²³⁸ Upon being honoured at the White House in 1966 Panofsky was nominated as ‘Princeton’s Man of the Week’. See *Town Topics*, op. cit.

¹²³⁹ See, for example, Panofsky to Walter Euler, Feb 24th, 1958 (2173).

¹²⁴⁰ Panofsky to Robert Klein, February 17th, 1964 (AAA). This letter was sent after Panofsky had read Klein’s ‘Thoughts on Iconography’. See R. Klein, *Form and Meaning: Essays on the Renaissance and Modern Art*, 1963 (English trans. 1979).

¹²⁴¹ Panofsky to William H. Woody Jr., November 13th, 1958 (2265).

¹²⁴² Ibid.

people from whom I have learned as much as I could but whom I could never hope to equal, let alone surpass.”¹²⁴³

This is a theme that surfaces repeatedly in Panofsky's later letters. It was obviously something to which he had devoted a good deal of thought, and about which he was entirely serious. When informed he would be mentioned alongside Aby Warburg in a lecture by Ernst Gombrich, for example, Panofsky was gratified, but felt compelled to state nonetheless,

“I honestly consider myself as a kind of eclectic (eclectics, after all, have their uses) who tried to salvage, as it were, whatever seemed to be worth salvaging from the nineteenth-century tradition of art-historical scholarship: Wölfflin, Riegl, Goldschmidt, and, of course, Warburg himself. As I look back upon what I have written, I cannot help realizing that the only merit I can claim is to have avoided one-sidedness as far as I could; but I hardly ever made what may be called an original contribution.”¹²⁴⁴

Baulking at another eulogistic appraisal of his work in 1967, Panofsky (by this point 75 years old) complained,

“This gentleman represents poor me as a great ‘innovator’. Whereas, in reality I consider myself to be a kind of eclectic who has attempted to save and to some measure to develop what he has learned from the great masters of the 19th century: Vöge, Goldschmidt, Riegl, Warburg and also Wölfflin.”¹²⁴⁵

Panofsky did have a penchant for referring to his own considerable achievements with a certain knowing self-deprecation. However, the repeated assertion that he was more of an “eclectic” than an originator, or “innovator”, should not be dismissed simply as false modesty on the part of this celebrated and influential scholar. I would suggest instead that Panofsky provides here a quite candid and truthful representation of his own efforts.¹²⁴⁶ Indeed, Panofsky's repeated claims that he should be considered a representative of an older tradition of scholarship puts into proper context his main objectives and motivations in America.

Panofsky had huge respect for that generation of German art historians cited in his later letters.¹²⁴⁷ The influence of Aby Warburg was obviously pivotal to his development as a young scholar in

¹²⁴³ Panofsky to Bruno Snell, December 7th, 1959 (2428). Panofsky was here responding to the citation he received upon being awarded the *Joachim Jungius-Medaille* in 1959. See D. Wuttke, *Erwin Panofsky Korrespondenz*, Band IV, op. cit., p539.

¹²⁴⁴ Panofsky to Ernst H. Gombrich, November 15th, 1965 (AAA).

¹²⁴⁵ Panofsky to Willibald Sauerländer, April 6th, 1967 (AAA). Panofsky made this same point in a letter to William Heckscher, November 23rd, 1955 (1870).

¹²⁴⁶ One is here reminded of Ernst Gombrich's report that Panofsky would refer to himself as “vain, but not conceited.” E.H. Gombrich, *Obituary: Erwin Panofsky*, op. cit., p359.

¹²⁴⁷ See also, Panofsky to Wolfgang Stechow, September 25th, 1958 (AAA).

Hamburg; and Panofsky also referred often to the seminal impact of his earliest teachers, Wilhelm Vöge in Freiburg,¹²⁴⁸ and Adolph Goldschmidt in Berlin.¹²⁴⁹ The extent to which Panofsky grappled with the ideas of both Wölfflin and Riegl in his early work is also now well-recognised; and he himself often acknowledged the huge stimulus of their work.¹²⁵⁰ As a practising scholar Panofsky attempted to synthesise the disparate influences of these great teachers. Furthermore, as a young academic he had believed that the judicious methods and approaches of this previous generation were in danger of being disremembered or discarded in the wake of the more insular and narrow-minded nationalism that was increasingly dominant in Weimar art historiography. At the University of Hamburg Panofsky considered it one of his principle duties to ensure that the best traditions of this previous generation endured. Indeed, his work in conjunction with the *Kulturwissenschaftliche Bibliothek Warburg* was an attempt to preserve and perpetuate a pluralistic tradition of ‘humanistic’ art history; scholarship that was cosmopolitan, objective and impartial in character. When in 1958 Walter Horn wrote to tell his former teacher what it had meant to learn under his guidance during those years in Hamburg, Panofsky provided an instructive response,

“It is, needless to say, a source of immense satisfaction to me to learn so late in life that my attempt to insert myself as a ‘transmitter’ between a glorious past and a questionable present was not entirely unsuccessful. I always thought of myself (and this is not false modesty, although false modesty is better than no modesty at all) not as an originator but as one whose job it was to participate in the perpetuation of a tradition which, when I started to teach, was in danger of disintegration; and if one has been moderately successful in doing this one has done enough.”¹²⁵¹

Panofsky’s mission statement remained the same in the United States. He wanted to continue to fulfil the role of ‘transmitter’, but he was forced to do so in what was a markedly different intellectual and academic environment. As an émigré Panofsky sought to propagate and, quite literally, re-present what he considered the best traditions of Germanic art-historical scholarship;

¹²⁴⁸ Panofsky wrote his doctoral dissertation under Vöge at Freiburg University, and the two men maintained a regular, intimate correspondence until Vöge’s death in 1952. Panofsky dedicated *Early Netherlandish Painting* to his former teacher when the book was published the next year. For Panofsky’s moving tribute to the influence of Vöge, see, E. Panofsky, ‘Vorwort’ to *Bildhauer des Mittelalters: Gesammelte Studien von Wilhelm Vöge*, 1958, ppix-xxxii.

¹²⁴⁹ Goldschmidt supervised Panofsky’s post-doctoral work in Berlin, and he also introduced the scholar to Aby Warburg. It was Goldschmidt who first recommended Panofsky to the Institute for Fine Arts at NYU in the early thirties. For Panofsky’s tribute to the memory of Goldschmidt see, ‘Goldschmidts Humor’, in *Adolph Goldschmidt zum Gedächtnis, 1863-1944*, C.G. Heise, ed., 1963, pp25-32.

¹²⁵⁰ See, for example, M.A. Holly, *Panofsky and the Foundations of Art History*, op. cit. In 1966 Panofsky asserted that “Riegl...was one of the chief forces to shape my own intellectual development, and I am still grateful to his memory.” Panofsky to Otto Pächt, April 19th, 1966 (AAA). For Panofsky’s respect for the work of Heinrich Wölfflin see, Panofsky to Meyer Schapiro, April 20th, 1956 (1935), & Panofsky to Carl Nordenfalk, January 13th, 1966 (AAA).

¹²⁵¹ Panofsky to Walter Horn, October 21st, 1958 (2250).

but he was compelled to adapt this re-presentation for what was a largely nescient American audience. This comes out clearly in a letter Panofsky wrote, in the last year of his life, to Eric Warburg (nephew of Aby):

*“Looking back upon my life, I think I can be satisfied with what I was able to do in transmitting to young Americans what I had learned from my elders and betters, and I have never ceased to consider myself as a kind of emissary of the Warburg Institute in partibus infidelium.”*¹²⁵²

Panofsky’s approach as an émigré had been to lead by example. From his earliest time in the United States he understood that he would have to cultivate an audience for the traditions of art historical scholarship he wanted to represent. He recognised that this prospective American audience was not particularly predisposed to any overly recondite or ‘speculative’ approach to understanding art; nor would they extend a particularly warm welcome to anyone who tried to impose or ‘inflict’ such an approach upon them. Panofsky made his peace with that early on. Moreover, he understood that there was little point focussing upon theoretical and methodological details when many in America remained so incognisant of the basic principles of historical, or ‘humanistic’, scholarship. As an émigré scholar in a foreign environment Panofsky believed it more important that he be intelligible and engaging in his communication.

Panofsky submitted his English-language ‘methodological’ statements early in his American career.¹²⁵³ In *The History of Art as a Humanistic Discipline* in particular he sought to encapsulate and elucidate, in succinct and straightforward terms, the hermeneutical bind that lay at the heart of any art-historical interpretation. Panofsky’s key point was that this “organic situation” had to be acknowledged by the individual historian. It was the understanding and the active recognition of this basic irrationality that, for Panofsky, conditioned properly disciplined or *wissenschaftliche* scholarship. It was this ‘humanistic’ spirit that Panofsky had found wanting in the American context. However, he did not try to further refine these ideas after they had been set down in the early thirties. Indeed, in 1955 the émigré scholar simply published these essays more or less verbatim, in *Meaning in the Visual Arts*. Over the course of his American career Panofsky endeavoured instead to provide a practical example of the ‘humanistic attitude’ towards art-historical scholarship. Instead of abstract theorization regarding the practice of art history, he offered a demonstration of art history in practice. Indeed, Panofsky would even refer to himself in America as “a practitioner, not a

¹²⁵² Panofsky to Eric M. Warburg, April 25th, 1967 (AAA).

¹²⁵³ *The History of Art as a Humanistic Discipline* (1938) & the ‘Introduction’ to *Studies in Iconology* (1939).

philosopher.”¹²⁵⁴ This, of course, entailed at least a partial renunciation of the kind of deep theoretical speculation for which he had been known in Germany. However, he purposefully adopted this persona in America, in order to best facilitate and expedite his own transplantation, and that of the traditions of art scholarship he so valued.¹²⁵⁵ Taken as a whole, Panofsky’s American work could be said to have provided a largely nescient English-language audience with a common-sense and digestible demonstration of what the history of art could *do* as a serious and meaningful academic discipline.

Ultimately, it was the level of Panofsky’s performance in this regard that determined his huge popularity and influence. A telling insight into the corollary of the émigré scholar’s approach is provided by one American journalist who witnessed first-hand just such a performance at Harvard. According to this commentator,

The academic world...teems with authorities...Authorities, however tend to acquire a certain unapproachableness, a manifestation of self-importance. It is therefore all the more pleasant to find an authority who is both accessible and modest. Erwin Panofsky, undeniably an authority, meets both these standards. His visit to Adams House last weekend proved that [experts] can be sociable and charming as well as models of scholastic virtue. Prof. Panofsky seemed delighted to talk to students who were no more than rank amateurs in his field and demonstrated conclusively that experts are not necessarily stuffy men...From a lesser man the lecture he gave in Adams House a week ago would have been received as an exercise in scholastic preciousness...[Indeed] If anyone but Panofsky had delivered this display of erudition, a listener could have passed it off as dilettantism, the result of rather meaningless research.¹²⁵⁶

¹²⁵⁴ Panofsky to George Boas, January 25th, 1951 (1431). Similarly, in 1950 Panofsky told one correspondent, “I am not a philosopher but a mere art historian occasionally forced to give account of his practices.” Panofsky to Horace M. Kallen, May 8th, 1950 (1362).

¹²⁵⁵ The extent to which this adopted American ‘persona’ was informed by firm conviction is clear from the many letters in which Panofsky resolutely demurred from ‘talking method’. See, for example, Panofsky to Victor Gourevitch, October 17th, 1960 (AAA); Panofsky to Corrado Maltese, November 4th, 1958 (2258); Panofsky to William H. Woody Jr., November 13th, 1958 (2265); Panofsky to Egon Verheyen, September 13th, 1960 (2525); Panofsky to H.W. Janson, February 2nd, 1962 (AAA); & Panofsky to Göran Hermerén, September 26th, 1967 (AAA).

¹²⁵⁶ A. Friendly Jr., *A Universal Man*, op. cit. Panofsky’s public performances, be they oral or written, often received this kind of praise. See, for example, Sue Adessa, ‘Panofsky Lectures for Skidmore Periclean Honor Society’, *The Saratogian*, Wednesday, March 25th, 1959, p13. When Panofsky submitted an article to the *Magazine of Art*, the editor wrote to inform him, “One of the many things I especially liked about your article for us was the way in which you made complicated ideas lucid and intelligible. We have, by the way, had many favourable comments on it.” Helen Franc to Panofsky, February 23rd, 1951 (1436). Even Panofsky’s colleagues respected his gifts in this respect. Henri Peyre, for example, informed his friend, “I am jealous of all that you know, but full of admiration for the light and humorous way in which you carry your erudition and your talents.” Henri Peyre to Panofsky, January 24th, 1956 (AAA).

There can be no doubt that Panofsky's model of English-language art history held (and holds) huge popular appeal. Indeed, as the émigré scholar himself was very much aware, by the mid-1950s his work had such common currency that it could even be found on the shelves of American drugstores. There is, however, a further, significant dimension to Panofsky's influence and legacy. As noted, Panofsky was always quick to acknowledge the formative influence of his teachers. He was particularly mindful of what it had meant as a young student to see and experience such scholarship in action.¹²⁵⁷ This was, of course, a fundamental tenet of the *Bildung* model of education, wherein the student learnt to be independent, responsible and disciplined through witnessing first-hand their teachers' example.¹²⁵⁸ As an established scholar himself, Panofsky was extremely conscious of enacting this role with his own American charges.

Even though Panofsky was neither obliged nor expected to carry out any teaching at the IAS, he always made a concerted effort to remain active in the classroom, whether at NYU, Princeton University, or further afield. Indeed, he always particularly regretted those periods when he did not have the time or opportunity to engage with students.¹²⁵⁹ Panofsky genuinely enjoyed the intellectual interchange, and he would often comment on how beneficial it was for the scholar to teach their own research and to receive stimulus from their interactions with students. As he informed Henri Peyre,

*"Over and over again, the problems the treatment of which was ultimately embodied in an article or book came to my attention in the very process of preparing lectures or discussing things with the students and might never have occurred to me had I been relieved of teaching obligations entirely."*¹²⁶⁰

However, Panofsky also well understood the significance such exchange had for the students themselves. It is telling that Panofsky was renowned for his generosity in terms of the time and help he extended to students and younger scholars.¹²⁶¹ In many ways it was through this active engagement with these younger colleagues that the great émigré scholar enacted his role as a "transmitter", a living conduit as it were, passing on the best traditions of humanistic scholarship through individual relationships and personal interaction.

This is one of the reasons Panofsky considered his position at the IAS so valuable and so important in the United States. Throughout his career he was able to invite countless younger students and early-

¹²⁵⁷ See, for example, Panofsky's, essay on Wilhelm Vöge; translated by E.C. Hassold, as 'Wilhelm Vöge: A Biographical Memoir', *The Art Journal*, 28:1, autumn 1968, pp27-37; especially p35.

¹²⁵⁸ Panofsky commented upon this in *Three Decades*, op. cit., p108.

¹²⁵⁹ As was the case, during the War, when so many of Princeton's graduate students had enlisted. See, Panofsky to Fritz Saxl, March 5th, 1943 (892).

¹²⁶⁰ Panofsky to Henri Peyre, January 26th, 1956 (AAA).

¹²⁶¹ See, E. Gombrich *Looking for Answers*, op. cit., p138-9.

career scholars to the School of Humanistic Studies where they would be prompted into fruitful contact with the more established and experienced scholars there in residence. It was through this human mechanism Panofsky believed, that the humanist 'spirit' or 'tradition' would be best passed on in America – individual to individual, through personal contact, human influence and active example.¹²⁶² 'Peter' Janson, a former student himself, provides some insight into the great power and stimulus of Panofsky's personality as a teacher:

The source of his vast impact...must be found not only in the breadth and quality of his learning but in his genius for human relationships. Former students, of whom there are now several generations, will agree that he was the greatest teacher any of them ever had. Even a brief exposure to him was electrifying, and to be in a seminar of his was an unforgettable experience. 'Pan' had a singular talent for sharing the excitement of a discovery with his disciples, and inspired them to efforts beyond their fondest hopes...[H]e would treat even a beginner's ideas with respect, always ready to find the grain of truth hidden in a mountain of nonsense. It was this generosity of spirit, this refusal to assert his own superiority lest it crush the youngster's self-confidence, that made him so uniquely effective as a teacher. Moreover, his students knew that as they grew into productive scholars 'Pan' was ever ready to share the excitement of their own discoveries, and to welcome them even if they happened to contradict his. Thus old students became old friends – a favourite phrase of his, especially during his later years.¹²⁶³

It was this scholarly *Weltanschauung* that provided Panofsky with his final sense of optimism and purpose late in life. Though he believed that the 'humanistic' infrastructure was somewhat lacking in the American school system, he was heartened that the 'spirit' of humanistic scholarship was being passed on, teacher to student, scholar to scholar, individual to individual. By the 1960s it was evident that Panofsky and a cohort of émigré art historians had been able to establish themselves amongst a group of respected American colleagues within the American universities. Several generations of students had, in turn, come through their classrooms and had themselves developed into valued colleagues. For Panofsky, these scholars together constituted the discipline of art history in the United States.

In later life Panofsky was also particularly impressed by the generation of art historians that emerged from the post-War European universities. In the 1950s and 60s, Panofsky was in regular contact with young central European scholars such as Egon Verheyen, Willibald Sauerländer, Dieter

¹²⁶² This point is made in response to Colin Eisler's claim that "It was too bad for America that Panofsky's life here was spent at that antiseptic neo-colonial All Souls, the Institute for Advanced Study." *Panofsky and his Peers in a Warburgian Psyche Glass*, op. cit., p86.

¹²⁶³ H.W. Janson, *Erwin Panofsky – Obituary*, op. cit., p159.

Wuttke, Robert Klein, Jan Białostocki, and Göran Hermerén.¹²⁶⁴ As well as being gratified by the interest of this up-coming generation in his own work, the aging scholar was genuinely impressed by theirs.¹²⁶⁵ Indeed, Panofsky was particularly encouraged by the fact that these Europeans were non-nationalist in their approach to scholarship.¹²⁶⁶ Panofsky went to some length to interact with this emerging generation, conducting lengthy correspondences, commenting favourably and at some length upon their work, and providing extensive help with their careers.¹²⁶⁷ In particular, Panofsky made every effort to have many of these European scholars travel to the IAS.¹²⁶⁸ Once again, this evidences Panofsky's keenness to engage on a personal level with younger colleagues, and this new cohort of European art historians provided him with further hope for the prospects and continuance of the history of art as a humanistic discipline.

¹²⁶⁴ In 1961 Egon Verheyen sent Panofsky his doctoral dissertation, and the older scholar sent him a return letter with many favourable comments. Panofsky to Egon Verheyen, April 14th, 1961 (2642). Verheyen would eventually help collect and publish Panofsky's German-language essays as, *Aufsätze zu Grundfragen der Kunstwissenschaft*, H. Oberer & E. Verheyen eds., 1964.

¹²⁶⁵ Providing a reference for Robert Klein, for example, Panofsky wrote, "I consider him to be one of the most intelligent and original – perhaps the most intelligent and original – scholars of his generation." Panofsky to Charles S. Singleton, October 31st, 1966 (AAA).

¹²⁶⁶ Panofsky told one young European scholar of his "admiration for the spirit of true, non-nationalistic scholarship which pervades your whole essay. From the point of view of one who has not set foot on German soil for more than twenty-five years, it is an exposition which arouses...above all, a great amount of hope for the future – [particularly] as far as the conquest of nationalism is concerned." Panofsky to Günter Bandmann, September 21st, 1959 (2389).

¹²⁶⁷ In 1961 Panofsky informed André Chastel, "I fully share your admiration for Mr. Robert Klein...and should be very eager to make his personal acquaintance." Panofsky to André Chastel, December 13th, 1960. Panofsky recommended that an essay by Klein on perspective be published in the *Art Bulletin*. See, Panofsky to David R. Coffin, July 5th, 1960 (2512). In 1967 Panofsky informed Dieter Wuttke, "As you know, I am always delighted to hear from you and to be kept abreast of your untiring activities in the interest of German humanism and humanism in general. So I was delighted to read your essay on Peter Vischer the Elder and his sons – an essay distinguished, like everything you write, by an exemplary objectivity towards the achievements or non-achievements of others and by an equally exemplary respect for the sources." Panofsky to Dieter Wuttke, November 30th, 1967 (AAA). Panofsky also expressed admiration for the research Wuttke had done on the work of the KBW. Panofsky to Dieter Wuttke, January 18th, 1967 (AAA).

¹²⁶⁸ Of Białostocki Panofsky wrote, "Without ever having met him, I kind of fell in love with his writings...and have been in more or less constant correspondence with him ever since. I also proposed him for the Dürer article in the new Italian *Enciclopedia dell'Arte*...and have already started some inquiries as to whether it might be possible to invite him to the Institute for a semester or a year." Panofsky to Jan G. van Gelder, March 25th, 1957 (2067). For Panofsky's admiration for the work of Sauerländer, see Panofsky to Willibald Sauerländer, December 2nd, 1959 (2426). Panofsky helped Sauerländer gain a place at the IAS in 1961-2. See Willibald Sauerländer to Panofsky, December 7th, 1960 (2572a). Panofsky worked with Millard Meiss to secure Verheyen a temporary membership at the IAS in 1962-3. See Panofsky to Millard Meiss, April 24th, 1961 (2647), and Panofsky to Verheyen, May 8th, 1961 (2658). Goran Hermeren visited Panofsky in Princeton in 1966, whereupon he conducted a "lengthy interview" with the older scholar. Panofsky subsequently provided a favourable reference for Hermeren for the American Council of Learned Societies, February 16th, 1967 (AAA).

Panofsky obviously found the engagement with younger students stimulating from a personal point of view,¹²⁶⁹ but he also recognised that it was hugely important in terms of the transference and continuance of scholarly traditions. The great émigré scholar's appreciation of this engagement became, if anything, even more pronounced as he grew older. In 1967, on the occasion of his 75th birthday – a celebration that marked the beginning of what would be the last year of his life – Panofsky, confined to bed through illness, was visited in his home by a group of graduate students from NYU. In spidery handwriting, indicative of his age and frailty, Panofsky told Millard Meiss of the joy this unexpected visit had brought him:

“My birthday was celebrated very quietly but pleasantly. The nicest thing was the appearance of a little delegation from the NYU graduate students who came over with a little address and well-selected presents...and made me feel very strongly how privileged an old schoolmaster ought to feel when he is still in some contact with young people – not unlike an old sock at the sea shore, wetted every year with a fresh wave of youth so that in the end it is quite encrusted with a thick layer of moss, seaweed and barnacles, but never entirely dried up.”¹²⁷⁰

The inveterate humanist, Panofsky remained, until the end of his life, deeply reflective in regards his position as an individual within the stream of tradition.

In this last regard, one would assume that Panofsky would have felt quite gratified (and even a little vindicated) had he known that it would be Dieter Wuttke – one of the young German scholars in whose work and career he had taken such an active interest in later life (and whose scholarship centred upon the German humanist tradition) – who, as an older man himself, would assemble, edit and publish the monumental and meaningful historical archive that is Erwin Panofsky's *Korrespondenz*.¹²⁷¹

¹²⁶⁹ As Panofsky informed one friend, “I have always considered, and still consider [young Sauerländer] to be the coming man in our profession...Our conversations rejuvenate me by at least forty years.” Panofsky to Delaissé, October 23rd, 1961 (2745).

¹²⁷⁰ Panofsky to Millard Meiss, April 11th, 1967 (AAA).

¹²⁷¹ D. Wuttke ed., *Erwin Panofsky Korrespondenz, 1910-1968*, 5 vols., 2001–2011.

Epilogue: Panofsky and Germany

Panofsky endeavoured to represent and propagate in America the humanist ideals of scholarship that had meant so much to him as a young academic in Germany. His full and long-standing commitment to American life speaks of the gratitude he felt towards the country that had offered him refuge and the opportunity to re-establish his career after 1933. However, as an émigré Panofsky was also forced to come to terms with his expulsion from the country of his birth, the country in which his scholarly *Weltanschauung* had taken form. No matter how comfortable and happily acculturated Panofsky professed to be in America, deep psychological wounds remained.

The initial sense of shock and disbelief is manifest in Panofsky's letters in the months following his dismissal from the University of Hamburg. In April 1933, for example, he told Margaret Barr,

*"The pathetic thing is, that I really love Germany and the Germans. Germans, if they are nice, are really very nice, and the majority of the men I really like and the women I really love or loved, are among them...and my family lived in Germany since 1657, much longer than the majority of Hitlerites."*¹²⁷²

Initial disorientation soon gave way to lasting anger and resentment though, and a marked distrust of the German people. Indeed, Panofsky formed quite definite, and quite negative, ideas about the 'German' disposition. He told Barr, for example, that there was, "a perennial Nazi trend in Germany."¹²⁷³ And even as late as 1956 he would proclaim,

*"People who do not know Germany fairly well will probably never understand that eternal combination of megalomania and inferiority complex which is so characteristic of the German attitude and, needless to say, quite understandable from a historical point of view...There is, in fact, something tragic about a highly gifted people that – apart from achieving some semblance of political unity so late – never managed to produce an internationally accepted style but alternately 'borrowed' from the Italians, the Netherlands, the French and the English, and achieved international recognition only in the least tangible form of artistic expression, music...Heidegger...exemplifies the very worst (yet, in a sense, the most alluring) features of the German character: that mixture of 'profundity' (in part even real), paranoiac misinterpretation of reality and fanaticism, hostile to reason yet fond of the most subtle and abstract speculation, which can be seen in Hitler as well as in Jacob Boehme, Luther as well as Hegel."*¹²⁷⁴

¹²⁷² Panofsky to Margaret Barr, April 16th, 1933 (362). Dieter Wuttke points out that this was an inaccuracy, and that Panofsky's family had lived in Germany since 1756. *Erwin Panofsky Korrespondenz*, Band I, p593, n.5.

¹²⁷³ Panofsky to Margaret Barr, March 3rd, 1943 (891).

¹²⁷⁴ Panofsky to Kurt H. Wolff, February 17th, 1956 (1911).

In this context, Panofsky's assertion that he was "free from what may be suspected as retroactive patriotism" seems an understatement in the extreme.¹²⁷⁵ The émigré scholar would actually inform one correspondent that he considered himself, "A German by birth, but not by conviction"¹²⁷⁶, and this is, I think, a most telling assertion, one that helps clarify just how deeply Panofsky appreciated the chance to re-establish himself in the United States. Despite the difficulties he experienced as an émigré, America had provided escape from the extremes of Nazi persecution, and the prospect of a life and career engendered through self-determination. It was this opportunity that informed Panofsky's resolute commitment to America. Unlike many of his fellow émigrés, he did not harbour a sense of longing for the country of his birth, and he never intended on going back.¹²⁷⁷ From the earliest point he had made the choice to *become* an American. This decision was a determined act of volition; one that was made, and appreciated, because it was possible.

After the War Panofsky could not bear to pick up relations with those who had chosen to remain in Germany. When asked by Walter Cook in 1945 if he held any ill feeling towards one such German art historian, Panofsky replied,

"I am no hero (few scholars are), and far be it from me to reproach anybody for being no hero either. But – and this is the point – I feel personally unable to resume human contact with those who have been connected with the III Reich, however remotely and unwillingly. This is not a matter of personal ill-feeling, much less a matter of moral disapproval (God forbid!). It is a matter of insurmountable instinct. No pack of cigarettes – unless it is wrapped in cellophane, and few human beings are – can lie in a drugstore for ten years without absorbing some of the smells pervading this drugstore...To quote Tommy Mann who is not even a Jew -: 'It is hard to achieve understanding between those who have witnessed the witches' Sabbath from without, and those who have been in on the dance and done homage to the Evil One.'"¹²⁷⁸

Panofsky was always happy to help any of his former Hamburg charges with their efforts to claim indemnity from the German government. As he informed one such student, "I believe that the Germans, now so prosperous, should be made to pay up wherever it is possible."¹²⁷⁹ However, he remained deeply sceptical about the motivations and the efficacy of the process of reconstruction and *Wiedergutmachung* that took place in Germany after 1945. Panofsky was keen to hear from friends as to what was happening with the efforts to reconstruct the German Universities, but he

¹²⁷⁵ Panofsky, *Three Decades*, op. cit., p84.

¹²⁷⁶ Panofsky to Henri Peyre, January 26th, 1956 (AAA).

¹²⁷⁷ Panofsky to Harry Levin, May 5th, 1961 (2654).

¹²⁷⁸ Panofsky to Walter W.S. Cook, October 1st, 1945 (1037).

¹²⁷⁹ Panofsky to Lotte Brand Philip, March 2nd, 1960 (2472).

had many reservations. Discussing with Meyer Schapiro “our handling of the university situation in Germany”, for example, he suggested,

“The only reasonable procedure would be to make use of those comparatively few but easily identifiable characters who, like old Alfred Weber, have a real, honest-to-Goodness hatred of Nazism, have had the courage to practise, or at least not to conceal, this hatred, and yet managed to survive on the spot (which is important because those who left in protest...have naturally lost touch with the ‘development’ of the others in the last few years). These men should simply be given the power to reconstitute faculties under the authority of our administration; and they would damn well know whom to appoint and whom to exclude, regardless of appearances...[T]he most dangerous ones are perhaps not such well-known pests as Pinder, Heidegger...Hubert Schrade, Count Baudissin, Stange, etc., but rather those who are apt to change colour like a chameleon...[T]hen there are those half-hearted Nazis like Percy Schramm...who ‘did not agree’ with Hitler on all points but made the best of it and now look forward to an ‘inner renaissance’ of Germany; or that man Schlunk...who had a remarkable ability to blow hot and cold at the same time.”¹²⁸⁰

When Panofsky was informed that German art historians were to issue a public statement of apology to those of their colleagues forced into exile, he did little to hide his cynicism:

“I must admit that I don’t see much point in it. If the German art historians had spontaneously voted a resolution of regret concerning the events under Hitler directly after 1945, it would have been a nice gesture – even though there is something embarrassing about public breast beating, and, more important, there is an awful truth in Aeschylus’ ‘The black blood once shed upon the earth, no one can bring it back by singing upon it.’ However, such a resolution voted now would have, in my opinion, no value whatever; it would be somewhat analogous to those loyalty oaths which the decent man either doesn’t sign or signs only while resenting the compulsion, while the others will sign it with great pleasure and no trace of sincerity.”¹²⁸¹

Once he had digested the actual ‘resolution of regret’ Panofsky wrote again to Paul Frankl,

“What [was] said was certainly well meant and decent but, in my opinion, not so much an apology for what had happened as an attempt to deny that anything had happened at all. If I remember it correctly, [it] mainly said that the German art historians were pleased to consider the emigrants as still belonging to the fold – which I for one do not exactly consider a compliment.”¹²⁸²

¹²⁸⁰ Panofsky to Meyer Schapiro, August 15th, 1945 (1027). For an account of the process of reconstruction, and a similar view on Heidegger, see Felix Gilbert, *A European Past: Memoirs 1905-1945*, 1988, p206-7.

¹²⁸¹ Panofsky to Paul Frankl, January 11th, 1957 (2031).

¹²⁸² Panofsky to Paul Frankl, February 7th, 1957 (2040).

Panofsky's mistrust of the German people ran deep. When Frankl sounded him out about possible émigrés who might return to the University of Cologne to aid the process of reconstruction, Panofsky retorted,

*"I am, frankly speaking, a little reluctant to make recommendations. If people are very mediocre...it would not be fair to wish them on the Germans. If they are better, it would not be fair to wish Germany on them, especially if they happen to be Jewish."*¹²⁸³

Panofsky was himself presented with many opportunities to return to Germany after the War. Many of those involved with the reconstruction of the German Universities recognised how symbolic it would be to have this prominent and internationally renowned émigré scholar return in some official capacity. Panofsky was offered his old position at Hamburg, for example, and then a Professorship at the University of Leipzig, the longest established chair of art history in Germany. Both these offers were politely but firmly declined.¹²⁸⁴ Panofsky also turned down the many different offers he received asking him to return to Germany to provide one-off lectures. In 1952, for example, he informed Colin Eisler that he had declined,

*"...a curious invitation to give the 'big' talk at the anniversary of the Germanic Museum, even although the 'Herr Bundespräsident' gave special assurance that I should not meet characters I should not like to meet even if they had been appointed full professors in the meantime."*¹²⁸⁵

In 1955 Hans Kauffman, the newly-appointed Rector of Cologne University, asked Panofsky, a former Berlin class mate, if he would grace his University with an official visit and lecture. Once again though, Panofsky passed up the opportunity to return to the country of his birth.¹²⁸⁶

Bruno Snell made perhaps the greatest effort to have Panofsky return to Germany in some official capacity. Snell and Panofsky had been colleagues at Hamburg University and their families were well acquainted. Even though Snell had stayed in Hamburg during the War, Panofsky was sure of his character, and they remained on good terms.¹²⁸⁷ Snell had been made vice-chancellor of the Hamburg Faculty of Philosophy after the War, and he then became vice-chancellor of the University itself. He was heavily involved in the efforts to re-establish the international contacts and reputation

¹²⁸³ Panofsky to Paul Frankl, December 4th, 1951 (1502).

¹²⁸⁴ For Panofsky's rejection of the Hamburg offer see, Panofsky to Heinrich Landahl, May 16th, 1946 (1087). For his rejection of the offer from Leipzig see, Panofsky to Bernhard Schweitzer, September 19th, 1947 (1176).

¹²⁸⁵ Panofsky to Colin Eisler, October 27th, 1952 (1563). Panofsky had been invited to mark the one hundredth anniversary of Nuremberg's *Germanisches Nationalmuseum*.

¹²⁸⁶ Panofsky to Hans Kauffmann, October 25th, 1955 (1852).

¹²⁸⁷ Panofsky described this "good old friend" as "one of the most decent characters in a very decent town." Panofsky to Ulla Petersen, January 16th, 1952 (1517).

of the institution, and with the general process of restoring Germany's intellectual links with other nations. It was in this context that Snell attempted to convince Panofsky to return to Germany.¹²⁸⁸

In 1957 Snell proposed that Panofsky be made a member of the German *Akademie für Sprache und Dichtung*. Informed of this prospective 'honour' though, Panofsky quickly moved to nip it in the bud; informing Snell,

*"I really cannot in good conscience consider myself as a representative of German literature...I am, after all, a simple art historian who of necessity has occasionally trespassed upon the preserves of literature, and I feel that these little excursions and digressions would not quite justify my inclusion in an association devoted to 'Sprache und Dichtung'."*¹²⁸⁹

Unbowed by his failure to engage Panofsky on this occasion, Snell wrote again, almost immediately, to ask whether Panofsky would instead consider speaking at the 50th anniversary of the *Hamburgische Wissenschaftlich Stiftung*. This time his erstwhile colleague turned him down by claiming he didn't have "a suitable subject" on which to speak.¹²⁹⁰ Snell contacted Panofsky once more in 1959, to inform him he was to be awarded the *Joachim Jungius-Gesellschaft* Medal, and to ask if he would receive this honour in person. Once again however, the summons was resisted. Panofsky acknowledged that the *Jungius-Gesellschaft* Medal was, "one of the highest distinctions the academic community of Hamburg can bestow on anyone"; but he frustrated Snell's efforts with the excuse,

*"...October is precisely the month when the term of the Institute opens and when the comparatively few permanent members are supposed to be on hand...I am afraid the Institute would not particularly like my skipping out."*¹²⁹¹

Snell made no further attempts to have Panofsky return to Germany. One can only imagine that Panofsky's string of excuses eventually served their purpose.

Panofsky was always keen to stress, to Snell, as to any others who invited him back to Germany, that his declinations were not motivated by any feelings of bitterness or resentment towards the German people.¹²⁹² However, it would seem he was being somewhat disingenuous in this regard. Panofsky was certainly much more ready to accept awards and professional commitments at other European

¹²⁸⁸ For details of Snell's cosmopolitan intellectual outlook, see <http://www.europa-kolleg-hamburg.de/europa-kolleg-hamburg/kolleg-hamburg/europa-kolleg-foundation-hamburg/history/bruno-snell-en/?L=1#c205>, accessed August 25th, 2013.

¹²⁸⁹ Panofsky to Bruno Snell, February 13th, 1957 (2041).

¹²⁹⁰ Panofsky to Bruno Snell, March 14th, 1957 (2060).

¹²⁹¹ Panofsky to Bruno Snell, May 25th, 1959 (2360).

¹²⁹² Panofsky to Bruno Snell, March 11th, 1957 (2054). See also, Panofsky to Ludwig Grote, April 24th, 1952 (1540), and Panofsky to Kurt Bauch, July 17th, 1956 (1972).

institutions, and he made several cross-Atlantic trips to do so, without ever once stepping foot in Germany. Deep reservations obviously remained. When Dora and he issued their collaborative publication *Pandora's Box* in 1956 Panofsky even informed Pantheon Books,

*"Incidentally, our reluctance to see the book published in translation applies only to German. In case someone should be interested in translating it into French, Italian, Spanish or Japanese, we would have no objections at all."*¹²⁹³

When an associate sent him a German-language article to read in 1958, Panofsky was just as explicit, responding,

*"I rather doubt whether I shall be able to get through the German offprint because I find it somewhat difficult (for purely psychological reasons) to read German literature."*¹²⁹⁴

Panofsky's issue with the German language is particularly telling. He found it very difficult to write professionally in German, and after 1934 he had vowed never to write again in his mother tongue. This was a personal embargo broken only in the mid-50s when Panofsky was asked to contribute the introduction to a posthumous collection of essays penned by his much-loved teacher, Wilhelm Vöge. As Panofsky disclosed in a candid letter to Paul Frankl,

*"As you know, I personally have not set foot on German soil since 1934 and not published a single line in German after that date...[However] in the case of Vöge the feeling of personal indebtedness is so overwhelming that I shall even break the rule of not publishing in German anymore."*¹²⁹⁵

Although he had felt compelled to make this particular exception, the Vöge essay caused Panofsky an inordinate amount of difficulty. As he related to Carl Nordenfalk,

*"It was the hardest thing I had ever to do, first of all because I loved the man so much...; second, because it had to be written in German...Owing to the linguistic developments in the last thirty years almost every word has become fraught and, as it were, tainted with so many disagreeable overtones that I found myself reduced to a kind of baby-talk and wrote my little essay as I would have done in 'Obersecunda' at the Joachimsthalsches Gymnasium."*¹²⁹⁶

Panofsky informed another correspondent that he found this German-language essay so difficult to write that he had "procrastinated for about two years."¹²⁹⁷ Due to the excessive delay the editor of the Vöge publication suggested Panofsky write his introduction in English, and have it translated into

¹²⁹³ Panofsky to Kurt Wolff, April 2nd, 1956 (1922).

¹²⁹⁴ Panofsky to Kurt H. Wolff, February 19th, 1958 (AAA).

¹²⁹⁵ Panofsky to Paul Frankl, January 11th, 1957 (2031).

¹²⁹⁶ Panofsky to Carl Nordenfalk, April 21st, 1958 (2199).

¹²⁹⁷ Panofsky to Hermann Fränkel, April 10th, 1958 (2193).

German. This though, was an option Panofsky would not countenance. As he was quick to inform Bauch, the editor, he had “fairly definite ideas about German style.”¹²⁹⁸

As a humanist scholar, with a deep understanding of philology and the processes of human symbolism, Panofsky was acutely sensitive to the Nazi’s use and abuse of language. Language was, of course, one of the most fundamental of those ‘symbolic forms’ and Ernst Cassirer also noted after the War,

If nowadays I happen to read a German book, published in these last ten years, not a political but a theoretical book, a work dealing with philosophical, historical, or economic problems – I find to my amazement that I no longer understand the German language. New words have been coined; and even the old ones are used in a new sense; they have undergone a deep change of meaning. This change of meaning depends upon the fact that those words which were formerly used in descriptive, logical, or semantic sense, are now used as magic words that are destined to stir up certain emotions. Our ordinary words are charged with meanings; but these new-fangled words are charged with feelings and violent passions...The men who coined these terms were masters of their art of political propaganda. They attained their end, the stirring up of violent political passions, by the simplest means. A word, or even the change of a syllable in a word, was often good enough to serve this purpose. If we hear these new words we feel in them the whole gamut of human emotions – of hatred, anger, fury, haughtiness, contempt, arrogance, and disdain.¹²⁹⁹

In a similar sense Panofsky found that to write academically in German was no longer a natural process. It required a sustained and concerted effort. As he told Ernst Holzinger,

*“We all know how much the German language has been polluted by the Nazis...and I have a feeling that those respectable writers who are conscious of this, are driven, as in self defense, into a kind of pseudo-eighteenth-century archaism merely in order to avoid the present linguistic chaos.”*¹³⁰⁰

This difficulty with German remained with Panofsky throughout the rest of his life. He had, in a quite symbolic sense, chosen to make the English language his own, and it is significant in this regard that his contribution to the 1965 Festschrift for Herbert von Einem, a collection of 34 essays written exclusively by German-born scholars, both émigré and non-émigré, was one of the only ones penned

¹²⁹⁸ Panofsky to Kurt Bauch, February 25th, 1958 (2174).

¹²⁹⁹ E. Cassirer, *The Myth of the State*, 1946, p283-4.

¹³⁰⁰ Panofsky to Ernst Holzinger, January 25th, 1961 (2597).

in English.¹³⁰¹ Ultimately, Panofsky's estrangement from the German language was itself symbolic of the sense of rupture he felt with German society and the German people.

It was only much later in life, with the natural development of a certain historical distance, that Panofsky began to reassess his relationship with the country of his birth. In the 1960s he was much more inclined to reminisce about his early life in Germany.¹³⁰² This was, perhaps, another element of that tendency to ruminate and self-reflect that so characterised Panofsky's later correspondence. However, Panofsky was also increasingly exposed to reports from close émigré friends who *had* returned to Germany. In 1958, for example, Gertrud Bing wrote to inform Panofsky that she had revisited their old stamping ground, and that this return had resulted in some mixed emotions:

*"I returned from Hamburg suffering from a profound 'Verwirrung der Gefühle' but I must say that to look at Hamburg is more beautiful than it ever was."*¹³⁰³

In 1965 Walter Friedländer then informed Panofsky,

*"I was in Freiburg for about two-and-a-half weeks in July and early August. I was there for twenty-two years (O God!) and hadn't been back since 1935. Psychologically I found it not very different from old times, and I especially enjoyed the excellent cuisine...People were extremely friendly, not only Willibald [Sauerländer] and [Kurt] Bauch and some older friends who came to see me, but also the official dignitaries. It was very interesting personally and politically. I was even persuaded to give a public lecture, and I was astounded at myself because on the spur of the moment I could speak for an hour in German about my old topic of the Sacred and Profane Love...Now I am at home again in my old piss pot, and I try to survive for still a little longer (but without much pleasure)."*¹³⁰⁴

This last letter in particular would have provided Panofsky with food for thought. The combination of wistfulness and melancholy is unmistakable.¹³⁰⁵ Friedländer was by far Panofsky's oldest and dearest friend; the two men having first met when Panofsky was a student in Friedländer's seminar at Freiburg. Friedländer was 93 when he penned this letter; he would die shortly thereafter.

Panofsky did eventually return to Germany, the year after he received this last letter from Friedländer. This first return to the country of his birth in over thirty years was occasioned by

¹³⁰¹ E. Panofsky, 'Classical Reminiscences in Titian's Portraits', in *Festschrift für Herbert von Einem*, (eds.) G. von der Osten & G. Kauffmann, 1965, pp188-202. The other English-language contribution was written by Charles de Tolnay.

¹³⁰² See, for example, Panofsky to Wolfgang Panofsky, June 6th, 1961 (2675); Panofsky to Erich Hubbula, January 27th, 1966 (AAA); Panofsky to Walter Schuchhardt, April 18th, 1966 (AAA).

¹³⁰³ Gertrud Bing to Panofsky, November 18th, 1958 (2269).

¹³⁰⁴ Walter Friedländer to Panofsky, October 1st, 1965 (AAA).

¹³⁰⁵ Friedländer was an older man when he was forced to leave Germany. As such, he had not accrued enough professional tenure during his career in the US to receive a decent annuity when he retired.

Panofsky's marriage to Gerda Soergel, a younger German woman who had worked as a research assistant at the IAS. As William Heckscher has noted, Panofsky's life with Gerda seems to have provided something of a new lease of life:

Dora Panofsky died after a long and trying illness. Soon thereafter, Panofsky married Gerda Soergel. Whereas until then he had adjusted his mode of living to that of an invalid, the last two years of his life were truly happy and eventful. For although frail, and now often beset by illness himself, Panofsky enjoyed travel with the youthful enthusiasm that had been dormant for so long.¹³⁰⁶

Not long after the death of his wife, Panofsky agreed to provide a series of lectures for Carl Nordenfalk in Sweden.¹³⁰⁷ Following their wedding in the summer of 1966, Gerda and Erwin Panofsky flew to Sorrento in Italy for their honeymoon. Panofsky then travelled to Stockholm to deliver his prearranged lectures while Gerda returned to Germany, "to take leave of her parents and dissolve her household in Bonn."¹³⁰⁸ Gerda then rendezvoused with her husband in Sweden. From there the Panofskys travelled together back to Germany, to Cologne to visit Gerda's parents.¹³⁰⁹ This was for Panofsky no 'official' return. Indeed, the visit to the home of Gerda's parents in Cologne seems to have been somewhat impromptu.¹³¹⁰ Nonetheless, this was the first time Panofsky had set foot on German soil since 1934.

The next year Panofsky returned to Germany once more, this time in a more 'official' capacity. Upon hearing that the great émigré scholar had ended his personal embargo, friends and colleagues in Germany rushed to have him return in a professional capacity. In 1967, Panofsky, aged 75, agreed to accept honorary degrees in person at the University of Bonn, and at the University of Freiburg. He also arranged to provide a lecture for Kauffmann in Cologne. Panofsky's return to Germany was eagerly arranged by some of his most trusted German friends; with Herbert von Einem of the University of Bonn and Willibald Sauerländer, then Director of the art-historical seminar at Freiburg, acting as his "unofficial travel agents."¹³¹¹ The Panofskys' planned to follow the Rhine from Cologne to Bonn, and then on to Freiburg. Afterwards they intended to recuperate in Badenweiler, a health resort and spa town on the French border.¹³¹²

¹³⁰⁶ Heckscher, *Erwin Panofsky: A Curriculum Vitae*, op. cit., p20.

¹³⁰⁷ Panofsky to Carl Nordenfalk, December 15th, 1965 (AAA).

¹³⁰⁸ Panofsky to Carl Nordenfalk, May 19th, 1966 (AAA).

¹³⁰⁹ Carl Nordenfalk wrote to Panofsky at the home of Gerda's parents on September 12th, 1966 (AAA).

¹³¹⁰ Panofsky had originally planned to sail directly from Gothenburg to New York, and reserved tickets for this voyage aboard the 'MS Kungsholm'. Carl Nordenfalk to Panofsky, March 8th, 1966 (AAA).

¹³¹¹ Although von Einem had remained in Germany during the war, Panofsky described him in 1966 as, "one of my very best friends." Panofsky to Dieter Wuttke, June 27th, 1966 (AAA).

¹³¹² See, Panofsky to Willibald Sauerländer, March 8th, 1967 (AAA).

When he arrived in Bonn Panofsky was informed he had been proposed for membership of the *Orden Pour le Mérite für Wissenschaften und Künste*. This was an extremely prestigious accolade, one of the highest civilian awards to be conferred in Germany, and when Panofsky agreed to accept it a ceremony in Munich was arranged at short notice. Although this was not on their original itinerary, the Panofskys travelled to the Bavarian capital from Freiburg. Panofsky's return to Germany in 1967 received considerable attention in the national press, with the award of the *Pour le Mérite* given particular publicity. Panofsky's acceptance of this medal was widely portrayed as a kind of official reconciliation between the world-renowned émigré art historian and the country of his birth. This idea of *Wiedergutmachung* must surely have hung heavy in the air on the day Panofsky received the *Pour le Mérite*, as the ceremony took place in the *Zentralinstitut für Kunstgeschichte*, a research institute housed in what had once served as the Munich headquarters of the NSDAP.

The truth of the matter is that the proceedings in Munich were far from a happy homecoming. Indeed, the award of the *Pour le Mérite* proved a most distressing and painful experience for Panofsky. The Chancellor of the *Orden Pour le Mérite* at this time was Percy Ernst Schramm. Schramm was a medieval historian from a Hamburg family with close connections to the Warburgs, and he and Panofsky were certainly well acquainted during the Weimar period.¹³¹³ Schramm though, had remained in Germany after 1933, where he volunteered for service in the *Wehrmacht*. During the War, in his capacity as official diarist for the German High Command Operational Staff, he rose to the rank of Major. After the War Schramm then published accounts of his time with the *Wehrmacht*, and his close observations of Adolph Hitler.¹³¹⁴ Debate continues as to the relative merits of Schramm's history of the Third Reich, and his appraisal of Hitler's personality,¹³¹⁵ however, there can be no doubt as to Panofsky's opinion of this former associate.

As was made evident in a previous letter, Panofsky harboured deep misgivings in regards Schramm's character and credentials, and his past association with the Nazis. Before he accepted the *Pour le Mérite* Panofsky had let it be known that he would only do so so long as Schramm was not involved in any way. Panofsky received assurances that this would indeed be the case. Nonetheless, it was Schramm who presented Panofsky with his medal at the *Zentralinstitut für Kunstgeschichte*. Furthermore, following the ceremony a grand reception was hosted by Schramm in the library of Munich University. This was a last minute alteration to the original plans (Panofsky's closest friends

¹³¹³ See Panofsky to Schramm, December 14th, 1932 (342).

¹³¹⁴ See, for example, P.E. Schramm, *Hitler als militärischer Führer. Erkenntnisse und Erfahrungen aus dem Kriegstagebuch des Oberkommandos der Wehrmacht*, 1965.

¹³¹⁵ See, for example, D.S. Detwiler, 'Introduction' to P.E. Schramm, *Hitler: The Man and the Military Leader*, trans., 1971.

had originally arranged that the post-award reception would be an intimate affair), and it meant that the award of the *Pour le Mérite* turned into an excruciating ordeal for the aged émigré scholar.

Gerda Panofsky has even suggested that the trauma caused by this turn of events initiated a marked deterioration in Panofsky's health, from which he never fully recovered. In a frank letter, written almost three years after the event, Gerda told Jan Białostocki of her late husband's return to Germany:

*"I am just sick of having it interpreted as a final Vorsöhnung, as my own countrymen so much want to have it. As Pan never broke with good and faithful friends from Germany he was on the other hand far from celebrating a final reconciliation with the official Germany, or, what might be worse for those with an unbewältigte Vergangenheit, he simply did not care any longer. He went back to Germany, because he was invited by dear friends and because he thought it would no longer matter whether he would meet them here or over there. As to the only Order connected to the German Government, the Pour le Mérite, he had made it quite clear and let it be known to at least two colleagues, eager to arrange for this, that he would not accept it as long as Percy Ernst Schramm was the acting Chancellor of that Order. He declared that by no means could he accept an Order by 'Hitler's Thukydides'. When he half-officially accepted the Order during a luncheon in Bonn, he had been deceived about this point and truly believed that Schramm was no longer the Chancellor. When he finally learned about the facts, he saw no way to withdraw from it anymore, but the painful and for him humiliating ceremony with all its emotional strain ushered in the rapid decline, of which he soon was to die."*¹³¹⁶

Panofsky was obviously deeply affected by his return to Germany.¹³¹⁷ Though he may have felt ready to return to the country of his birth, and to meet close and trusted friends, Panofsky was in no way prepared to associate with scholars whom he believed had worked in the service of the Third Reich. He found this kind of academic compliance and collusion utterly abhorrent and, ultimately, unforgivable.

Panofsky's strength of feeling on this matter is also evident in those post-1933 letters in which he referred to the German philosopher Martin Heidegger. Heidegger was made Rector of Freiburg University under the Nazis, and had proclaimed his support for the regime from the University lectern. When Panofsky received an invite to attend the 500 year jubilee celebrations at Freiburg University in 1957, he felt compelled to respond,

¹³¹⁶ Gerda Panofsky to Jan Białostocki, November 8th, 1970 (AAA).

¹³¹⁷ Roxanne Heckscher, Panofsky's long-serving secretary, also suggested, "...of course he was terribly plagued by having gone...He felt he had betrayed his people...I mean everybody knew he was Jewish, but he wasn't 'glowingly' Jewish in the sense that I don't think it mattered much to him. He probably hadn't given it all that much thought, although he was Jewish. And I think having gone [back to Germany], he felt very guilty and he was plagued by this." *A Secretary's Recollections*, op. cit.

"I have received the invitation to attend the jubilee of Freiburg University but would be wanting in frankness were I to conceal from you the fact that the prominent position given on this occasion to professor Heidegger, whose Rektoratsrede of 1934 still rings in the ears of more people than Freiburg University seems to realize, would prevent me from attending the festivities."¹³¹⁸

Similarly, when Panofsky heard that Heidegger had been proposed as a member of the *American Academy of Arts and Sciences* in 1966 he wrote immediately to the Executive Officer of the Academy, resigning his own membership on the grounds that Heidegger was,

"...a notorious Nazi who misused his high academic office for the most vicious propaganda on record, particularly in his notorious Rektoratsrede of 1934."¹³¹⁹

Panofsky considered such academic complicity deplorable. And it was in this sense that he was so deeply demeaned and humiliated by what seem to have been Schramm's purposeful machinations in 1967. Panofsky felt coerced into providing a kind of legitimacy or apology for Schramm through their sharing of a very public platform.



10. Erwin Panofsky receiving the *Pour le Mérite* from Percy Ernst Schramm, July 26th, 1967.

¹³¹⁸ Panofsky to Kurt Bauch, April 22nd, 1957 (2085). See also, Panofsky to Herman Fränkel, Apr 10th, 1958 (2193).

¹³¹⁹ Panofsky to the Executive Officer of the *American Academy of Arts and Sciences*, January 31st, 1966 (AAA).

For Panofsky it was the academic *in particular* who should *not* have allowed his individual autonomy to be subsumed under the banner of National Socialism. Indeed, it was the principle duty of the scholar to remain independent, detached, reasonable and objective. As in the Kantian definition of *Enlightenment* itself, the scholar had to make the concerted effort to think freely and independently. As an individual he had to have the courage to utilise his own reason, without direction from another. This was the fundamental and defining responsibility of the humanist scholar. In surrendering this autonomy, those scholars who involved themselves with the Nazis also surrendered their integrity, their identity, and, ultimately, their very humanity. As Ernst Cassirer, the great émigré humanist philosopher, wrote in 1946,

...here are men, men of education and intelligence, honest and upright men who suddenly give up the highest human privilege. They have ceased to be free and personal agents.¹³²⁰

When Panofsky lectured in 1967 at Freiburg University, site of Heidegger's "notorious Rektoratsrede" and his own *alma mater*, he chose to speak, in English, on *Erasmus and the Visual Arts*.¹³²¹ This was a significant choice. Erasmus, himself a resident of Freiburg for six years, was a Latin scholar, a measured, critical thinker, who had sought to rationalise the notion of free will in response to Luther's polemics expressing a dogmatic belief in predestination.¹³²² Ultimately, for Panofsky, Erasmus was the "humanist par excellence,"¹³²³ an important intellectual forefather of that tradition of scholarship, a humanist tradition which sought to realise both the freedom of the individual, and the responsibilities any such realisation entailed.

¹³²⁰ Cassirer, *The Myth of the State*, op. cit., p286-7.

¹³²¹ Letter from the Rector of Freiburg University to Erwin Panofsky, June 19th, 1967 (AAA). This lecture was published posthumously: E. Panofsky, 'Erasmus and the Visual Arts', *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes*, 32, 1969, pp200-227.

¹³²² C.H. Miller, ed., *Erasmus and Luther: The Battle Over Free Will*, 2012, translated by C.H. Miller & P. MacCardle, with an Introduction by J.D. Tracy.

¹³²³ *The History of Art as a Humanistic Discipline*, op. cit., p25.

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This section contains only those works by Panofsky considered germane to this thesis.

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