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**A NEW STUDY IN MIGRATION:
ERWIN PANOFSKY
AND
'THE HISTORY OF ART AS A
HUMANISTIC DISCIPLINE'
IN
THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA.**

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2007

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ABSTRACT

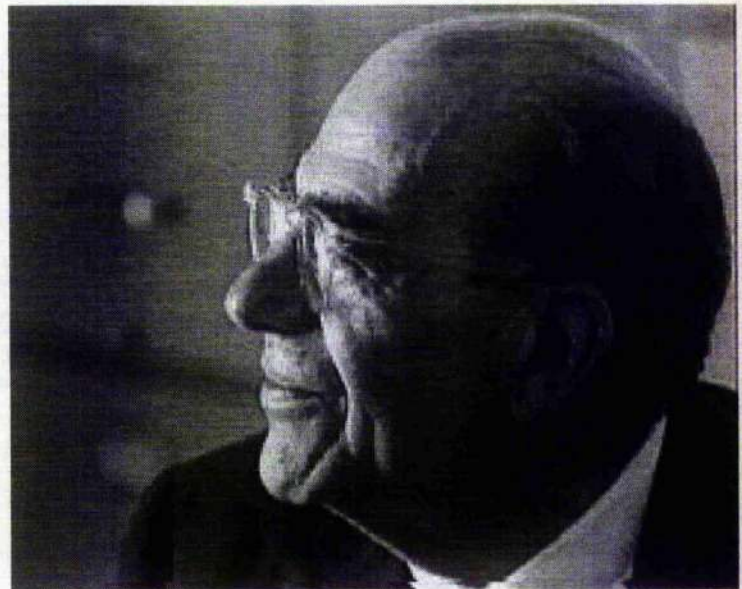
Focusing on the life and work of Erwin Panofsky this thesis reassess the effects of migration on German-speaking art historians in America after 1933, and the subsequent establishment of the discipline in the Anglophone world.

Section one examines the recent historiography of art history concerning this intellectual migration, demonstrating how recent critical trends have created a certain miscomprehension between the 'German' and 'American' periods in the discipline's history. Section two identifies Panofsky's career in Germany and America as a valuable point of reference in the explication of this model. This section then concludes by highlighting the need for a re-examination of the development of both Panofsky's scholarship and the discipline as a whole following the migration.

Sections three to five utilise the recent publication of Panofsky's correspondence, and the insights these letters reveal, to re-evaluate the art historian's initial experiences in the United States. Section three begins by examining the differences between the German and American academic environments and Panofsky's early attempts to transplant something of his native tradition of *Kunstwissenschaft*. Section four looks at the difficulties émigré scholars faced in America and how Panofsky's awareness of the need for a process of mutual acculturation enabled him to be a success. Section five then concludes by providing a re-evaluation of the scholar's reaction and response to the alterity of his new environment; showing that privately at least, Panofsky had misgivings about the success of his attempted transplantation.

PART ONE

ART HISTORY, CULTURAL MIGRATION, AND 'THE TWO PANOFSKYS'



I. Art History: Germany and America

(i) Intellectual Migration, 1933

The National Socialist Party's ascent to power in Germany in 1933 provoked a massive cultural migration. The 'Professional Civil Service Restoration Act' (*Gesetz zur Wiederherstellung des Berufsbeamtentums*), passed by the Nazis on the 7th April 1933, meant anyone designated 'politically undesirable' could be summarily dismissed from government office. This forced compulsory retirement on all Jewish civil servants. As German education was state run the Nazis in effect were administering a massive cull of academic intellectuals. Many university professors, gymnasium teachers, and museum directors and curators adjudged to be in opposition to the Nazis' totalitarianism were to lose their jobs in this intellectual cull.¹

Almost all of these intellectuals were forced to leave Germany as the impact of Nazi intolerance became apparent. The majority chose to relocate to the United States of America. The sudden and enforced migration of these scholars, summarily dismissed by Goebbels as "a pack of Jewish scribblers", brought with it a massive transplantation of knowledge and learning from Germany to America. In a report by 'The Emergency Committee in Aid of Displaced Foreign Scholars' set up in America in the 1930s, this migration was compared to the influx of those Greek-speaking scholars from Byzantium who so influenced the 'Renaissance' of learning in the Italian Quattrocento.² Whether or not one considers this sentiment to be somewhat hyperbolic, the migration is still regarded today as "the greatest intellectual sea-change of modern times".³

The transmission of this tradition of learning from Germany impacted enormously upon the development of scholarship in America. Barry Katz notes that, "the sudden arrival of the thousand or more European scholars who sought refuge in the United States during the Hitler years served to lift not only individual institutions but also whole disciplines out of the isolationism that characterised American intellectual life

¹ Gymnasium teachers and museum directors and curators were recognised as important scholars at this time in Germany.

² See Maurice R. Davies et al., *Refugees in America: Report of the Committee for the Study of Recent Immigration from Europe*, 1947.

³ Barry Katz, "The Acculturation of Thought: Transformations of the Refugee Scholar in America", *The Journal of Modern History*, 63:4, 1991: December, p.740.

no less than American foreign policy.”⁴ In this period today, in which the humanist tradition finds itself increasingly under attack, the migration becomes particularly significant. The sudden and momentous transference of knowledge from the Old World to the New was fundamental in making this tradition manifest in the anglophone world.

With such a momentous transmission of knowledge, culture and learning it is no surprise to find that this migration has generated a continuous literature from the 1930s onwards. Very often such discourse has been the product of immigrant scholars themselves⁵ and it is interesting to note how the content and tone of this literature has developed as the historical distance between writer and the event increases. There is a cautious optimism and sense of gratitude expressed by the immigrant scholars in the years immediately following the migration and this develops later into more critical evaluations of the acculturation process and more analytical assessments of the difficulties and compromises involved in acclimatising to a foreign country and adapting to a different intellectual environment. This shifting historical perspective is reflective of the complex and involved nature of examining the consequences of enforced immigration and intellectual exile. It emphasises that as historians, only now entering an era in which the living presence of these exiled scholars is felt no longer, we are still coming to terms with the significance and the implications of this massive intellectual shift.

(ii) ‘Kunstgeschichte American Style’

This is certainly the case in the history of the discipline of art history. Art history was one of the disciplines most drastically affected by the Nazi purge. Around 250 of some 1,100 professionally trained art specialists working in Germany in 1933 were

⁴ Ibid, p.740.

⁵ For an early analysis of the migration from an American perspective see S. Duggan and B. Drury, *The Rescue of Science and Learning: The Story of the Emergency Committee in Aid of Displaced Foreign Scholars*, 1948. For personal accounts of the experience of exiled scholars see e.g. W.R. Crawford (ed.) *The Cultural Migration: The European Scholar in America*, 1953; F. Gilbert, *A European Past: Memoirs, 1905-1945*, 1988; R. Bendix, *From Berlin to Berkeley: German Jewish Identities*, 1986. For a general scholarly approach see for e.g. D.P. Kent, *The Refugee Intellectual: The Americanisation of the Immigrants, 1933-41*, 1953; D. Fleming and B. Bailyn, eds, *The Intellectual Migration: Europe and America, 1930-1960*, 1968; L. Coser, *Refugee Scholars in America*, 1984; M. Jay, *Permanent Exiles: Essays on the Intellectual Migration from Germany to America*, 1985; S. Barron and S. Eckmann, *Exiles and Émigrés: The Flight of the European Artists from Hitler*, 1997.

Jewish, or of Jewish origin.⁶ This was an unusually high proportion in relation to other academic disciplines, meaning that in the enforced migration the displacement of art historical knowledge was particularly significant.⁷ In total, approximately one quarter of all the art scholars working in Germany were forced to leave their country when the Nazis came to power.⁸ The vast majority chose to relocate to the United States of America.⁹ The sudden and violent displacement of this large number of art historians from Germany to the USA has been described as “the most momentous transmission of scholarship in the twentieth century”.¹⁰ It is certainly fundamental to any understanding of the history of the modern discipline in the English-speaking world.

The establishment of art history in the United States as a recognised independent discipline was predicated upon the arrival of the refugee scholars in 1933. This is not to say that the study of art and architecture did not exist in the USA prior to the migration. America did have a strong tradition of individual scholarship that dated back into the 19th century.¹¹ However, at this time in America the history of art was not recognised as a separate area for professional study to the extent that it was in Germany. *Kunstwissenschaft*, usually (and in my opinion not very helpfully) translated as the ‘science’ of art (or the systematic or academic study of art) had been established as an independent discipline in Germany since the second half of the nineteenth century. In American universities however, the study of art had generally evolved as a subsidiary area of interest in departments of archaeology or classics.¹²

⁶ It should be remembered that in Germany at this time museum and gallery curators were almost always university trained and considered art historical scholars in their own right.

⁷ Karen Michels provides an analysis of why German-Jewish men, from an independently wealthy, middle class, were drawn particularly to the discipline of art history in “Art History, German Jewish Identity, and the Emigration of Iconology”, in C. Soussloff (ed.) *Jewish Identity in Modern Art History*, 1999, p.167.

⁸ Though the great majority of these art specialists were expelled from Germany because they were Jewish, or because of their Jewish ancestry, there were some who were exiled due to their political allegiances, and others who felt compelled to leave voluntarily when the Nazis assumed power.

⁹ 130 art historians in all, fled to America: 35% university professors, 25% museum workers, 10% freelance scholars, 30% recent graduates. Source: Karen Michels, “Transfer and Transformation”, in S. Barron and S. Eckmann, *Exiles and Émigrés: The Flight of the European Artists from Hitler*, 1997, p.306.

¹⁰ Ibid, p.304. Michels suggests that the displacement of this art-historical knowledge from Germany to America is comparable in effect only to the migration of Psychiatry.

¹¹ For the contributions of such figures as Samuel Morse, C.E. Norton and Henry Adams, see Colin Eisler, “American Art History, God Shed His Grace on Thee”, in *Art News*, 75, May: 1976, pp.64-73. For art scholarship in America pre-migration see also *The Early Years of Art History in the United States*, ed. Craig Hugh Smyth and Peter M. Lukebart, 1993.

¹² See Robert Goldwater, “The Teaching of Art in the Colleges of the United States”, in *College Art Journal*, 2:4, 1943, pp.3-31. Goldwater notes that prior to the 1930s, the study of art in American

Either that or it had remained the rarefied pursuit of those in the upper echelons of society; what one scholar has recently termed "the independently wealthy WASP cliché."¹³ The strongest trends in the American approach to art were 'appreciationism' and connoisseurship, where knowledge about art was considered a matter of individual sensibility as opposed to the subject of an organised and coherent historical discipline. As Kathryn Brush has noted, in America before the migration, "...the study of art history was not envisioned 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."¹⁴

At the turn of the century it was generally recognised by American scholars of the history of art that "Its native tongue (was) German."¹⁵ Following WWI those in the US concerned with establishing the discipline as an independent and autonomous area of study had looked to Germany as their model. Scholars such as William Ivins and Alfred Barr travelled to Europe to study art history at German universities and to learn from the German pedagogues. It also became increasingly common between the Wars for German scholars to be invited to the USA as guest lecturers.¹⁶ Such transatlantic influence was still a nascent development in America however, and it has been noted that well into the 1920s figures such as Paul Sachs at Harvard University still "had to campaign vigorously for the recognition of art history as an independent area of study."¹⁷ Although there were noted individual scholars working in American universities in the 1920s and early 1930s there was not a sense of coherence to the institutionalised study of art that defined it as a discipline. Looking back at his student years John Coolidge described what he saw to be the significance of the migration, "...art history in America remained sporadic and provincial. It was the task of the

colleges was usually the study of classical art, or of an archaeological interest, "Departments of art became in effect departments of classical art and archaeology. Even when, at a later date, they developed into normal departments of the history of art, they continued to find their chief interest in the field which had helped to establish them in this country", p.27.

¹³ Joan Hart, "Erwin Panofsky and Karl Mannheim: A Dialogue on Interpretation", *Critical Inquiry*, 19:3, Spring: 1993, p.562.

¹⁴ Kathryn Brush, "Marburg, Harvard, and Purpose-Built Architecture for Art History, 1927", in *Art History and its Institutions: Foundations of a Discipline*, E. Mansfield (ed.), 2002, p.69.

¹⁵ Quoted by E. Panofsky, "The History of Art", in R. Crawford (ed.), *The Cultural Migration*, 1953, p.84.

¹⁶ Kurt Weitzmann, for e.g., provides details about the connections between Adolph Goldschmidt and American art history in the 1920s in *Sailing with Byzantium from Europe to America: The Memoirs of an Art Historian*, 1994.

¹⁷ Brush, (n.14), p.74. For a recent analysis of art history in America prior to the migration see K. Brush, "German Kunstwissenschaft and the Practice of Art History in America After World War One. Interrelationships, Exchanges, Contexts", *Marburger Jahrbuch für Kunstwissenschaft*, 26, 1999, pp.7-36.

refugee scholars from Germany to establish it as a unified discipline and to bring it abreast of continental practice."¹⁸

Although occasioned by horrific circumstances, the migration of German art historians is now adjudged to have been ultimately propitious with regards to the development of the historical study of art in America. Indeed, in the conventional wisdom, the migration is regarded as a mutually beneficial process which enhanced the émigré art historians' scholarship and, in turn, established America as the world-leading centre of art historical research in the post-WWII period.

Colin Eisler provides the standard account of this transplantation of art historical knowledge in 'Kunstgeschichte American Style: A Study in Migration'.¹⁹ Published in 1968, this essay is even today widely acknowledged to be the basic assessment of the consequences of the migration and its significance for the subsequent development of the discipline in America.²⁰ In a highly detailed and factual survey, Eisler, the son of two émigré scholars and himself a student of several of the émigré art historians in America, paints a happy picture of the positive outcome of the transplantation of art history from Germany to the USA.

According to Eisler, the émigré scholars imported to America the idea that art history could be a serious and justified scholarly discipline. German art historians were adjudged to have communicated a sense of academic conviction in their approach to art history; a "high intellectual seriousness" which validated the study of art for an American audience and confirmed it as an important, even integral, part of university curricula and of modern intellectual life.²¹ Eisler regarded the influence of the émigrés as fundamental in opening the discipline up, enlarging its purview and encouraging more and more students in America to take the historical study of art seriously. As opposed to the native American tendency for purely "stylistic or archaeologically oriented research, with considerable emphasis on connoisseurship", Eisler notes,

¹⁸ John Coolidge, obituary for Walter Friedlaender, *Art Journal*, 26:3 Spring: 1967, p.260. Coolidge was a Harvard graduate in 1935. He then spent his postgraduate years at NYU working under the influence of various émigré scholars.

¹⁹ Colin Eisler, "Kunstgeschichte American Style: A Study in Migration", published in D. Fleming and B. Bailyn, eds, *The Intellectual Migration: Europe and America, 1930-1960*, 1968.

²⁰ For subsequent analysis that relies fundamentally on the blueprint mapped out by this essay see Karen Michels, "Transfer and Transformation", or Lewis Coser, *Refugee Scholars in America*. Both refer explicitly to Eisler as the primary source of their information.

²¹ Eisler, p.621.

...the influx of émigré scholars in the 1930s caused art historical studies in America to broaden in scope...Considerations of function and meaning became more important than before, with instruction and research moving towards a more intellectually challenging approach.²²

The repeatable and practicable methodologies imparted by the émigré scholars, and taken up with enthusiasm by their American counterparts, were adjudged to have endowed the study of art with a new professionalism and a positive sense of identity and purpose. According to Eisler the conception of the discipline imported by the exiled scholars was concordant with the American academic ethic, in which universities considered themselves the organ of a democratic educational principle, whose ideal goal was the participation of the largest possible number of its citizens in the benefits of education. German scholars were adjudged to have popularised the idea that the study of art could be open to anyone, with the emphasis on intellectual capacity as opposed to societal position:

Refugee scholars of the 1930s contributed toward the removal of a certain aura of preciousness and ever so upper-class dilettantism which had long been assiduously maintained or cultivated in the world of art scholarship in America (...) The increasing popularity of art on all fronts throughout the 1940s and 1950s, this 'democratisation' of art history might have taken place in any event, but it seems probable 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.²³

To Eisler the development of 'Kunstgeschichte American Style' was doubly auspicious, as it saw the refugee scholars themselves positively influenced and their scholarship rejuvenated through their experience in America. He writes,

Many European scholars in the United States have found liberating qualities in the atmosphere of the American campus...The refreshingly breezy interchange

²² Ibid, p.611.

²³ Eisler, p.621.

between student and teacher, so different from the frozen stratification of the German university, has...produced a more spontaneous and fresh approach in the work of foreign scholars in America.²⁴

Eisler referred to the benefits of "the more open climate of enquiry in America", in which émigré scholars "had less fear of having their ideas stolen", and claimed that this proved encouraging and had a healthy, liberating effect on their work.²⁵

The use of the more practical and pragmatic English language is also acknowledged to have revitalised the scholarship of German art historians in exile. Eisler suggests that the use of English forced the foreign scholars to write more clearly and succinctly, freeing them from the notoriously elaborate sentence structure of German scholarly writing. For Eisler, the exposure to a more 'positivistic' scholarly ethic²⁶ and the release from the propensity for incessant theoretical speculation influenced the work of German art historians markedly for the better. In this understanding their output became more productive and efficacious, and contributed to the rapid development of a less obtuse, more practicable and 'do-able' art history.²⁷ Writing in 1968, Eisler stated,

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 from 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 these works, upon re-reading them, today

²⁴ Ibid, p.603.

²⁵ Ibid, p.603.

²⁶ Eisler notes that "Speculation (was) decidedly not in style on the American campus", p.608.

²⁷ John Coolidge recalled to Eisler, of his time spent under the guidance of émigré scholars at NYU's Advanced School, "The great discovery I made at the Institute was that art history was a discipline. There was a standard method. The second great discovery was the importance of creativity. Perhaps because I was an undergraduate, nobody at Harvard suggested that one should consider scholarly publication. Nobody at New York University suggested that one should consider anything else, and the sooner the better. All of them were publishing all the time, and their simple message was, 'Now YOU get cracking'." Eisler, p.621.

claim that they are less than entirely sure what they meant when they were written.²⁸

When reading Eisler's account of the development of 'Kunstgeschichte American Style' one is struck by how smooth and entirely propitious the whole acculturation process is seen to be. He gives what is essentially an unproblematic account of a mutually beneficial process of integration and assimilation. Indeed, Eisler's essay can be read as a paean of praise to the influence of the German art historians and the consequent success and prosperity of the discipline in the decades following the migration. He writes,

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.²⁹

Encouraged by the 'achievements' of his discipline in 1968, Eisler considered the émigrés' assimilation into the fabric of American intellectual life and the subsequent development of art history in the USA to be, ultimately, a "success story"; and his survey concludes that "(a)s far as the vast majority of the émigré scholars are concerned, their life in America has clearly been a gratifying and rewarding experience."³⁰

The discipline of art history certainly prospered and flourished in America in the decades following the migration. Indeed, it became the fastest growing discipline in the United States university curriculum. In a survey of the teaching of the history of art in US institutions carried out in 1943 (a survey warranted by the meteoric growth of the discipline) it was recorded that the number of courses in art history had increased from 380 in 1920 to 510 in 1930, and by 1940 that number had jumped dramatically to 795.³¹ Although a purely statistical survey, with no attempt made to analyse the reasons behind such an unprecedented rise, the author did add,

²⁸ Ibid, p.605.

²⁹ Eisler, p.625.

³⁰ Ibid, p.625.

³¹ R. Goldwater, "The Teaching of Art in the Colleges of the United States", (n.12), p.19.

It is moreover worthy of note that (...) there was no break in the steadily mounting numbers of courses and instructors. The chart for 1933 in tabulating the effect of the depression years might be expected to record such a break had it occurred, but the course total for that year was surprisingly greater compared with 1930.

The author allows the statistics to speak for themselves.

Although the history of art was becoming increasingly institutionalised in American universities prior to 1933, there is no doubt that its identity as an independent discipline was cemented and its academic appeal hugely enhanced by the migration of German émigré art historians. Highlighting the contrast to the years before the influx of German art historians, Harry Bober recorded with satisfaction that, in America in 1962, "Art as an historical discipline cannot be questioned as part of the liberal arts curriculum."³² In a later article of 1976, Eisler reiterated his conviction that the US had become the leading centre for art historical research and scholarship:

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 ravening horde of art historians.³³

With the successful establishment and rapid development and expansion of the discipline in the decades following the migration it is easy to understand why Eisler, from his vantage point in 1968, could pronounce the transplantation of art history from Germany to America to be a straightforward "success story".

³² Harry Bober, "The Gothic Tower and the Stork Club", in *Arts and Sciences*, Spring: 1962, p.3.

³³ Colin Eisler, "American Art History, God Shed His Grace on Thee", p.66.

(iii) Reaction to 'Kunstgeschichte American Style'

Although the migration clearly had a massive impact upon the development of art history in the United States, I would suggest that Eisler's straightforward understanding of the transplantation of the discipline from Germany to America has more recently come to seem somewhat inadequate, and even problematic. Over the past 30 years or so there has been increasing criticism of the nature of the discipline as it developed in the period after the migration. This trend, which can be understood as a specific reaction to the character of what Eisler termed 'Kunstgeschichte American Style', suggests the need for a more analytical re-evaluation of the migration and the nature of the transplantation of art history from Germany to the United States.

In order to trace the evolution of this recent reaction to what is now regarded as the 'traditional' practice of art history in the Anglophone world, it is worth quoting at some length a speech given by James Ackerman in 1958.³⁴ As editor of the *Art Bulletin* Ackerman was considered the ideal candidate to address the College Art Association on 'The Status of American Scholarship in the Arts'. His words provide both an insight into what he perceived to be 'the state of the discipline' in the USA twenty five years after the influx of the émigré scholars, and a prescient forewarning of the criticisms that would become more insistent in the last quarter off the twentieth century. Ackerman begins by acknowledging the progress and development of the discipline of art history under the influence of the German art historians:

We have all flourished in the last decades. The practice of art, history, and aesthetics have become integral to higher education, and are respected disciplines where they were once peripheral recreations. Teaching staff in these fields have expanded phenomenally. The impress of American scholarship (...) is being felt increasingly abroad, so that today hardly a volume of a leading European journal appears without the collaboration of writers in this country. This may be regarded as recognition for the high standards of precision and objectivity that are characteristic of our efforts.

We have begun to be able to demonstrate in creative deeds as well as in words our gratitude to the European scholars...who formed a nucleus of our

³⁴ James S. Ackerman, "On American Scholarship in the Arts", *College Art Journal*, 17:4, Summer 1958, pp.357-362.

advanced schools and who did so much to foster the maturing of education of the arts.³⁵

He soon turned however, to examine what he perceived to be the shortcomings of the discipline in America, and the danger it faced in resting on its laurels,

We have reason for self-satisfaction; but since this state of mind is so soporific, I propose to put our virtues to one side and to seek out our potential weaknesses.³⁶

According to Ackerman the discipline was in danger of falling victim to its own 'successes'. In his estimation, the discipline had flourished and enjoyed a sustained period of growth and productivity because of the practicability of its scholarly apparatus, its methods,

The typical American art historian is, like his fellow scientist and businessman, distinguished for his know-how. He has developed sensitive techniques for dealing with historical data, and is singularly free from national or parochial biases. He does not twist facts to fit a theory because for him facts are sacrosanct.³⁷

Ackerman expressed his fear though, that such an unequivocally 'positivist' approach would ultimately be self-serving and damaging to the discipline,

...respect for fact may easily turn into reverence. Facts are admirable tools, but it is so gratifying to discover them that we can unconsciously come to think of them as ends in themselves.³⁸

He was concerned that as art history developed as a discipline in the USA its 'success' was being measured principally on the efficaciousness of its methods. He believed that although this acted as a kind of self-legitimizing exercise for art

³⁵ Ibid, p.357.

³⁶ Ibid, p.358.

³⁷ Ibid, p.359.

³⁸ Ibid, p.360.

historians and for the discipline as a whole it would eventually prove debilitating. By concentrating on 'empirically' garnered art-historical 'facts', art historians were, in Ackerman's view, presuming the knowledge they produced to be of an 'objective' standard, and felt themselves unencumbered by the need to consider the theoretical implications of their work. He warned, "the virtues of objectivity deserve a second glance", and lamented the tendency among his contemporaries to foster "a suspicion of theory" and "an unwillingness to examine the principles and values by which we work."³⁹ Ackerman felt that this would lead to critical stagnation and the atrophy of the discipline. He was wary of the situation he saw developing in which art historians were content in their manipulation of the 'objective' facts and unconcerned with the theoretical exigencies of their practice.

I can conceive of a cultural equivalent of the atom bomb being manufactured in historical laboratories, by scholars as unaware as the physicists a decade ago that concentration on techniques does not always produce innocuous progress...Without theory we are barely justified in describing and analysing works of art, dating them, reconstructing, icono-graphing them, but we cannot evaluate or interpret them, nor discuss their relationship to one another...In education as in scholarship there is a danger that methods may overcome principles.⁴⁰

In 1958, Ackerman's was a relatively solitary voice of critical dissent in art historical discourse. It was only in the early 1970s that other writers began to echo his concerns with the nature and character of the discipline, as it had become established within American academia.⁴¹ Kurt Forster, like Ackerman, believed that art historians had been lulled into a false sense of disciplinary security by their 'triumph' in the decades following the migration,

Art history is today an independent field of the Humanities and an integral part of university curricula. Developing on the fringe of the Liberal Arts, art

³⁹ Ibid, p.361. Ackerman pointed out "I do not know of any American essay of this generation on the nature and purposes of art history."

⁴⁰ Ibid, pp.360-361.

⁴¹ It is worth mentioning Leo Steinberg here too, as another author who took issue with the bland and insipidly 'objective' art history which he regarded as characteristic of disciplinary practice. See L. Steinberg, "Objectivity and the Shrinking Self", *Daedalus*, 97:3, Summer: 1969, pp.824-36.

history and the related activities of museums, galleries, publishers and a vast art educational industry have for some time now assumed a vital role of educational and economic significance. Art historians may therefore be distracted by this institutional and public success of their discipline from a critical examination of its scholarly foundations.⁴²

Forster felt that the art historian's obdurate belief in the 'objectivity' of their disciplinary knowledge, effectively 'guaranteed' by their productive methodologies, was detrimental to the critical health of the discipline. He felt that art historians' concentration upon empirically garnered data and their success in dealing with the art historical 'facts' had overshadowed the need for self-conscious reflection on the nature of art historical practice. Forster also argued for a more conscious exposition of the theoretical exigencies of disciplinary procedure. In the same edition of the journal in which Forster aired his grievances Svetlana and Paul Alpers also voiced their dissatisfaction with the traditional art historian's 'positivist' self-conception. They called attention to "the weakness of art history as a critical discipline"⁴³, and chastised the 'traditional' art historian's "old fashioned and naive notions of objectivity".⁴⁴ Ackerman once more aired his grievances with the discipline in the same publication in 1974, reiterating his concerns that art history would suffer from some kind of critical marasmus if it continued to function under the impression that it could be an empirical 'science'. Again, he drew attention to the fact that "...art history in this country has been a discipline without any avowed theoretical base; until quite recently, few of us have cared to reflect on the assumptions by which we worked."⁴⁵ In 1977 Svetlana Alpers echoed Ackerman's concerns once more, claiming that the problems of art history's self-legitimising, positivist conception of itself were inherent in its disciplinary structure. Alpers lamented,

⁴² K. Forster, "Critical History of Art or Transfiguration of Values?" in *New Literary History*, 3:3, Spring: 1972, p.459.

⁴³ S. & P. Alpers, "'Ut Pictura Noesis?' Criticism in Literary Studies and Art History" in *New Literary History*, 3:3, Spring: 1972, p.438.

⁴⁴ Ibid. p.454.

⁴⁵ J. Ackerman, "Toward a New Social Theory of Art" in *New Literary History*, 4:2, Winter: 1973, p.315.

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.⁴⁶

The development of these criticisms of 'traditional' art-historical practice throughout the 1970s evidences the growing influence of the critical and theoretical trends that had transformed other disciplines, perhaps most notably literary studies, from the 1960s onwards. Post-structuralism and the procedures of deconstruction had posited a radical challenge to the view that theory-neutral observations were 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"⁴⁷, were declared untenable.

The art historians quoted above were attempting to bring to light the significance of such theories for the practice of their discipline. In the 1970s however, such criticism still appeared somewhat tangential to the main concerns of the discipline. It is significant for example, that none of the writers referred to here had their disciplinary remonstrations published in a mainstream art history journal.⁴⁸ Retrospectively this is regarded as evidence in itself that in the 1970s traditional art-historical practice remained somewhat retardataire in respect to the critical and theoretical 'cutting edge' of other disciplines such as literary studies and anthropology.⁴⁹ In the wake of the 'theoretical earthquake' that had rocked other disciplines in the 1960s and 1970s, art historians are now considered to have remained generally secure in the conception of their discipline and in the 'objective' status of the knowledge they produced.

As is now well recognised the criticisms of the discipline of art history, as it had developed in the years following the migration, really began to make an impression

⁴⁶ S. Alpers, "Is Art History?" *Daedalus*, 106:3, 1977, p.9.

⁴⁷ Michael 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, p.40.

⁴⁸ Publishing in the journal of *New Literary History*, Forster, Ackerman and the Alpers could be seen in fact, to be making an explicit contrast between the more theoretically 'conscious' practice of literary studies and the traditionally 'non-critical' discipline of art history.

⁴⁹ Referring specifically to the articles mentioned above, Robert Nelson makes the point, "critical reflections on art, its history, and its (re)presentations...appeared in the early 1970s, but significantly only at the margins of historical discourse." "At the Place of a Foreword" introduction to *Critical Terms for Art History*, Nelson & Shiff eds, 1996, p.xii.

on mainstream art-historical discourse in the 1980s. In 1986 for example, one writer could claim that, after appearing to be attached to “eternal verities” throughout the 1970s, “American art history has become increasingly self-conscious about the theoretical assumptions underlying its scholarly productions.”⁵⁰ Criticisms of the discipline began to be registered in a much more insistent and vocal manner.⁵¹ The growing sense of antipathy towards ‘traditional’ art history coalesced, to some degree, into an acknowledged, widespread, even conventional phenomenon.⁵²

Reference to the ‘crisis’ of art history became *de rigueur* and signalled the beginning of a more conscious period of self-examination for the discipline. The idea of a ‘New’ art history (or histories) emerged as an explicit reaction to the ‘traditional’ or ‘old’ art history.⁵³ That is, the ‘New’ art history was positioned as a critical response to the ‘traditional’ discipline’s supposedly ‘positivist’ self-conception (posited as self-deception). Blake Stimson asserts,

What was positivist about the old according to the new was its unwillingness and inability to take up inquiry into causes and ultimate origins of its own methods: it took its categories, its objects of study, and its sense of self to be simply given and therefore acceptable.⁵⁴

Mark Roskill’s book ‘What is Art History?’, in which he claimed “Art history is a science, with definite principles and techniques”, was taken to be representative of the old-fashioned, traditionalist and obsolete view of the discipline. One ‘new’ art historian claimed for example that, “In its serene self-confidence, (Roskill’s) book stands out like a beacon, illuminating the last days of art history’s innocence.”⁵⁵

The recognition that all scholarly discourse embodies an implicit theoretical position, engendered by writers such as Jacques Derrida, encouraged a new

⁵⁰ K. Moxey, “Panofsky’s Concept of ‘Iconology’ and the Problem of Interpretation in the History of Art”, *New Literary History*, 17:2, Winter: 1986, p.265.

⁵¹ Taking stock of these burgeoning critical trends in 1982, Oleg Grabar writes “...at nearly all levels – in undergraduate courses, meetings of contemporary artists, or august academic gatherings – the field of art history is seething with questions and concerns about its aims and its ways.” “On the Universality of the History of Art”, *Art Journal*, 42:4, Winter: 1982, p.281.

⁵² Though never conceivable as a ‘movement’, the ‘new’ trends were acknowledged in mainstream art-historical publications from the early 1980s onwards. See for example, *Art Journal*, 42:4, Winter: 1982, and esp. the editor’s statement concerning “The Crisis in the Discipline”, Henri Zerner, p.279.

⁵³ A now well-known collection of essays compiled by A.L. Rees and Francis Bordello under the title *The New Art History*, was published in England in 1986 and in the US in 1988.

⁵⁴ B. Stimson, “Art History after the New Art History”, *Art Journal*, 61:1, Spring: 2002, p.96.

⁵⁵ See *The New Art History*, p.2.

generation of art historians to be demonstrably self-conscious about their own theoretical 'positioning' in their work. Over the past 20 years or so, writers have been increasingly concerned with attempting to fill the 'theoretical lacuna' considered hitherto to be such a prevailing characteristic of traditional art history since the migration.⁵⁶ This has led to a sense of pluralism within the discipline; with writers becoming more and more attentive to the particular 'quintessence' of their own position. Indeed, so diffuse and so varied have been the 'new' approaches, it is even questioned whether art history still has the theoretical and scholarly coherence necessary to remain viable as a discipline.⁵⁷

What does give much recent art-historical discourse a coherence and a particular commonality, is the fact that it can be understood and characterised as a definite reaction to the 'traditional' conception of the discipline as it developed in the years following the migration of German-speaking art historians. 'New' art historians commonly define their positions as a self-styled and self-conscious reaction to the idea that art history could be a 'positivist', purely empirical 'science', concerned solely with the production of an objectively valid knowledge.⁵⁸ The character of this reaction to 'traditional' art history is often particularly virulent and polemical. Hyper-conscious and hypercritical of what they consider to have been their predecessors' long and torpid "dream of scientific objectivity",⁵⁹ the 'new' art historians feel compelled to redress the balance quickly and decisively. As if shamed by the embarrassment of the supposedly conservative and retardataire status of art history in comparison to other, more theoretically strident disciplines, much recent art historical discourse is positioned as a self-conscious and overtly antagonistic riposte to the discipline's perceived theoretical inertia. Donald Preziosi's influential book, 'Rethinking art History: Meditations on a Coy Science', could be said to have set the standard in this type of disciplinary polemic. It is implicit, even in Preziosi's title, that

⁵⁶ For examples of work of the last 20 years or so that displays a self-consciously theoretical approach to art history see: N. Bryson, *Vision and Painting: The Logic of the Gaze*, 1983; D. Freedberg, *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.

⁵⁷ See for example Hans Belting, *The End of the History of Art*, 1987; and D. Preziosi, *Re-thinking Art History: Meditations on a Coy Science*, 1989, (esp. p.17).

⁵⁸ For an example of this consciously posited antithesis between 'traditional' 'positivist' art historians and post-structuralist art-theorists, see K. Moxey, *The Practice of Theory: Post-structuralism, Cultural Politics and Art History*, (1994), introduction, pp.1-27.

⁵⁹ D. Preziosi, introduction to Part III of *The Early Years of Art History in America*, (n. 11), p.148.

he believed 'old' art historians reluctant and unwilling to examine the 'shaky' epistemological foundations upon which their discipline's supposed claims to 'scientific objectivity' were based. In 'meditating', or ruminating upon this very subject, Preziosi purports to uncover the existence of those genetic fallacies which 'traditional' art historians were reticent about confronting. In 'Rethinking Art History' Preziosi is therefore self-consciously declaring the need for, and indeed the provision of a 'new' art history.

I would suggest that the trends of the past 20-30 years must be understood as, in effect, an exercise to a great extent in self-periodisation, or self-definition. By vociferously opposing the 'old' 'positivist' conception of the discipline, 'new' art historians self-consciously present themselves as ennobled critical and theoretical writers. The 'modern period' in the history of anglophone art history defines itself in opposition to that which went before it.

From a recent perspective therefore, the idea that the transplantation of art history from Germany to the United States was an unmitigated 'success' comes to seem somewhat problematical. The very foundations upon which the discipline became established in America, the reasons given by Eisler for its 'success' as it were, are now identified as critical weaknesses. Confidence in the efficaciousness of art historical methodologies and the corresponding conviction that the discipline of art history was based securely upon the production of an objectively verifiable knowledge, have given way to a more rigorous and critical examination of disciplinary practice. The theoretical and critical character of much art historical discourse today seems based upon an explicit rejection of the 'positivist' assumptions of that which Colin Eisler termed 'Kunstgeschichte American Style'.

(iv) Renaissance of 'German' Art History

Furthermore, problems with the conventional wisdom concerning the migration of German scholars to America in the 1930s are exacerbated by recent consideration of the character of the discipline as it existed in Germany **before** the migration. Concomitant with the reaction to 'traditional' art historical practice in the Anglophone world there has been a sustained historiographical excavation of the discipline. The 'self-consciousness' engendered by the recent critical response to the discipline has stimulated a sustained examination of the theoretical and

epistemological foundations upon which 'traditional' art historical practice was based. In other words, the realisation that theory was unavoidable compelled many writers to investigate just what theories art historians had been using and what assumptions those in the discipline had been working under while considering their work to be 'value-free'.⁶⁰ Subsequently, a large and fundamental part of art historical discourse of the past 25-30 years or so can be characterised as a retrospective historiographical examination of the discipline itself, a history of art history as it were.⁶¹

One fundamental outcome of such disciplinary 'self-reflection' has been a nostalgic 'renaissance' of the period in which art history was first formed and institutionalised as a discipline, that is, in German-speaking countries in the era leading up to the migration. This factor has caused real problems for our understanding of the migration around 1933. German art historians of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries are today eulogised as exemplary figures for their concern with establishing an epistemological basis for the study of art.⁶² They are lauded for engaging with philosophical issues in their work and for their conscious attempts to establish a theoretical framework with which to investigate the art of the past. Ultimately, figures from this period of German art history are panegyricised because they fully embraced debate and discussion on the critical foundations of the discipline itself. They are praised for embodying those very 'qualities' that were presumed lacking in 'traditional' art-historical practice in the anglophone world.

⁶⁰ Such concerns can be traced back to Ackerman's speech quoted from previously. Ackerman suggested that the disappearance of theory was illusory, and that rather than ask why theory had disappeared, a better question to ask would be 'whose theory have we using uncritically?' Ackerman reiterates this point in his book, *Art and Archaeology*, 1963, p.172. Following Ackerman, Christine McCorkel provides an excellent analysis of the "emphasis on fact and value free observation in art history" and the "development of an anti-theoretical attitude in the United States." C. McCorkel, "Sense and Sensibility: An Epistemological Approach to the Philosophy of Art History", *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*, 34:1, Autumn: 1975, pp.35-50. Examination of the theoretical positions that underlie traditional art historical practice can also be seen as a response to the more recent claim by Terry Eagleton, "that those...who disliked theory or claimed to get along without it, were simply in the grip of an older theory...Hostility to theory usually means an opposition to other people's theory and an oblivion of one's own." T. Eagleton, preface to *Literary Theory: An Introduction*, 1983, pp. vii-viii.

⁶¹ For an insight into the literature which constitutes this massive art historical growth-industry, see: W. M. Johnson, *Art History: Its Use and Abuse*, 1988; V. H. Minor, *Art History's History*, 1994; E. Fernie, *Art History and its Methods: A Critical Anthology*, 1995; D. Preziosi, *The Art of Art History: A Critical Anthology*, 1998; A. D'Alleva, *Methods and Theories of Art History*, 2005.

⁶² By 'German' I am referring here to art historians writing in the German language.

From the 'modern' perspective the formative years of art history's history – i.e. the period in German-speaking countries prior to the enforced migration – are now seen as a 'golden era'. Figures such as Alois Riegl, Heinrich Wölfflin, and Max Dvořák are now considered to have produced the kind of critical and self-consciously theoretical art history that 'new' art historians should aspire to; as opposed to that which became characterised as 'traditional' art history in the Anglophone world following WWII.

T.J. Clark made this 'renaissance' explicit in his seminal essay of 1974, 'The Conditions of Artistic Creation'.⁶³ Clark believed that European art historians in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries had asked important questions about how art was produced and about the nature of 'art' and our reception to it. He believed such discourse had made art history in this period a truly vital discipline of no little prominence in the intellectual and scholarly firmament.⁶⁴ Clark suggested that art history had suffered as a critical discipline in the English-speaking world and that it had lost something of its avant-garde spirit because the fundamental questions were no longer broached. At the time of writing, he believed that the practice of art history was but a pale reflection of the critical discipline that was flourishing in Germany prior to 1933.⁶⁵ Clark lamented the fact that the thoughts and ideas of those German-speaking scholars writing in the period before the enforced migration remained inaccessible to the majority of art historians in the English speaking world, simply because their work had not been translated. He suggested that "one thing we badly need is an archaeology of the subject in its heroic period: a critical history, uncovering assumptions and allegiances."⁶⁶

⁶³ T.J. Clark, "The Conditions of Artistic Creation", *Times Literary Supplement*, May 24, 1974, pp.561-2.

⁶⁴ Clark pointed to the fact that in this 'golden period' art historians were considered among the foremost critical and intellectual figures of their day. He posed the rhetorical question, "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'?" *ibid*, p.561.

⁶⁵ "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, to ask them of dense, particular evidence. 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'?" *ibid*, p.561.

⁶⁶ Clark, *ibid*. Hubert Damisch also mapped out a similar retrospective view of the history of art history, contrasting the 'golden' German period (pre-migration) with the discipline as it became institutionalised in the English-speaking world. See "Semiotics and Iconography", in *Times Literary Supplement*, October 12, 1973. Damisch wrote, for example, of "a history of art which – now that the great period of Riegl, Dvořák, Wölfflin and others is past... – has shown itself to be totally incapable of renovating its methods." He sought to draw attention to the "epistemological abdication of an

Michael Podro's book, 'the Critical Historians of Art', can be read as an attempt to answer Clark's call for a better understanding of this important period in history of the discipline.⁶⁷ Podro surveyed the formative years of art history, the German roots of the discipline, when the 'founding fathers' were involved in a critical discourse concerning the writing on aesthetics of philosophers such as Kant, Schiller and Hegel, and the significance and theoretical implications of such philosophy for a history of art. Podro circumscribed his object of study as a particularly German critical tradition⁶⁸ dating from the mid nineteenth century into the first three decades of the 20th century. He made an explicit distinction therefore, between 'German' art history (pre-migration) and 'American' art history (post-migration). As Craig Hugh Smyth has noted,

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.⁶⁹

From the 1980s onwards, indeed since the publication of Podro's book, interest in the work of German art historians from the period before the migration has mushroomed.⁷⁰ In this nostalgic excavation, which continues even today, writers of

intellectual discipline which, in its day, was one of the best attested sources of the Formalist movement, and thereby the semiotic venture itself."

For the first evidence of a more mainstream acknowledgement that a 'golden period' had been followed by a period of decline see Henri Zerner (n.52) - Zerner noted in 1982, "A growing minority of art historians, especially those of a younger generation, are convinced that art history, which at the turn of the century seemed to be at the forefront of intellectual life, has fallen behind; that far from progressing, it has deteriorated and reduced the thought of its founders, Morelli, Riegl, Wölfflin, and others to an uninspired professional routine feeding a busy academic machine." (p.279).

⁶⁷ M. Podro, *The Critical Historians of Art*, 1982.

⁶⁸ In Podro's words, "Language here provides the relevant cultural category." Introduction, p.xxi.

⁶⁹ C. H. Smyth, *The Early Years of Art History in the United States*, 1993, p.6. I believe that the use of the term 'archaeological' here implies that American art history was characterised by its confidence in treating the artwork as an 'object', i.e. without the urge to consider how such an object is constituted as 'art'.

⁷⁰ In a review of three books, published in the early 1990s, dedicated to the work of Alois Riegl, for example, Kathryn Brush noted, "Until the early 1980s, very little English language scholarship on Riegl existed, and only about fifty pages of his writings had been translated. In view of this circumstance, the appearance during 1992 and 1993 of three English language publications on Riegl...constitutes a major event. These studies acquire greater significance in relation to the renewal of interest in the founders of art history manifested...in recent decades. It is within the context of this broader process of historiographical excavation, and for their contribution to the study of pioneering German-speaking theorists in particular, that the three publications need to be considered here." *The Art Bulletin*, 76:2, June 1994, pp.355-358.

the 'golden period' in the history of art history are 'rediscovered' and valorised for their critical perspicacity and their willingness to openly confront the theoretical exigencies of art-historical practice. There has, in effect, been a 'translation boom' in which countless books and journal articles have been published with the explicit intention of making the work of these 'Critical Historians of Art' accessible for the first time to an Anglophone audience.⁷¹ The writings and ideas of these scholars are 'revived' in order to provide exemplars for a 'modern' critical art history.

This recent historiographical trend is not fashioned simply as a straightforward 'rebirth' of the 'classic' period. It is well recognised today that German scholars such as Riegl and Wölfflin were writing in a different era, and that their work was embedded in a different intellectual milieu.⁷² It would be unrealistic to expect their work, simply translated, to merge smoothly with contemporary discourse and fill a supposed theoretical void. Many modern 'historiographers' consciously position their work therefore, as a critical and historical examination of an older generation of writers whose work is translated and re-interpreted for its relevance to 'contemporary' concerns. As Matthew Rampley contends,

⁷¹ For recent translations of authors identified as 'Critical Historians of Art' see for example, A. Riegl, *Problems of Style: Foundations for a History of Ornament*, translated by E. Kain, annotation and introduction by David Castriota, preface by Henri Zerner, 1992; and Aby Warburg, *The Renewal of Pagan Antiquity: Contributions to the Cultural History of the European Renaissance*, translated by D. Britt, introduction by Kurt Forster, 1999.

For a sample of the numerous journal articles that constitute this historiographical trend, see M. Iversen, "Politics and the Historiography of Art History: Wölfflin's Classic Art", *Oxford Art Journal*, 4:1 July: 1981, pp.31-34; J. Hart, "Reinterpreting Wölfflin: Neo-Kantianism and Hermeneutics", *Art Journal*, 42:4, Winter: 1982, pp.292-300; M. Rampley, "From Symbol to Allegory: Aby Warburg's Theory of Art", *The Art Bulletin*, 79:1, March: 1997, pp.41-55; M. Rampley, "Max Dvořák: Art History and the Crisis of Modernity", *Art History*, 26:2, April: 2003, pp.214-237; D. Adler, "Painterly Politics: Wölfflin, Formalism and German Academic Culture, 1885-1915", *Art History*, 27:3, June: 2004, pp.431-456; M. Gubser, "Time and Theory in Alois Riegl's Theory of Perception", *Journal of the History of Ideas*, 66:3, July: 2005, pp.451-474. (In referring to these scholars as 'German', I am of course following Podro's distinction in which language provides the common denominator.)

For the most recent historiographical overview of art history in Germany before the migration see, F. J. Schwartz, *Blind Spots: Critical Theory and the History of Art in Twentieth Century Germany*, 2005.

⁷² 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*, 1985, L. Dittmann & O. Bätschmann eds. He asks "What kind of commentary are we to construct upon a literature if we no longer believe its theories?" (It is worth noting here that Podro's was the only English language essay in this publication.)

"(I)f the return to the origins of art history has any meaning, it can only be because the thought of the discipline's German and Austrian 'grandfathers' is still felt to be of relevance today."⁷³

This sustained interest, over the past 20 years or so, in the German roots of the discipline must be understood as part of the reaction to what is considered 'traditional' art history in the English-speaking world. In effect, the 'renaissance' of 'The Critical Historians of Art' has become an important factor in the recent periodisation that has taken place within the discipline. The 'modern' period can be characterised as both a self-styled reaction to a supposedly 'non-critical' Anglophone art-historical practice, and a conscious look back beyond this period to a 'golden' or 'classical' age of German art history in which critical theory and philosophy were considered integral to disciplinary discourse.

From the modern 'theoretical' and 'disciplinarily self-conscious' point of view therefore, there now exists a dichotomy between 'German' art history of the period leading up to the migration and 'American' art history of the period following the migration. This historiographical perspective, and the resultant 'periodisation', has engendered a definite and value-laden polarisation between the period of 'The Critical Historians of Art' and the 'naively positivist' practice of 'traditional' art historians in the English-speaking world. The idea is posited that there is a fundamental difference in kind between 'German' art history before the migration and 'American' art history after the migration. This is, by definition, a qualitative distinction. From the 'modern' point of view the German 'golden period' is eulogised while the American period is considered the 'unthinking', 'non-critical' retrogradation of this tradition.⁷⁴

⁷³ "From Symbol to Allegory: Aby Warburg's Theory of Art", (n.71), p.41. Rampley himself draws parallels between the writings of Aby Warburg and the work of Michele Foucault in "Iconology of the Interval: Aby Warburg's Legacy", *Word and Image*, 17:4, December: 2001, p.323; and Margaret Iversen 'revived' the work of Alois Riegl, seeking to elucidate its relevance to the 'modern' concern with theories of reception. Discussing Iversen's, *Alois Riegl: Art History and Theory*, Brush argues, 'Her aim is to demonstrate the continuing pertinence of Riegl's work for contemporary art historians... In particular she is concerned with bringing certain highly original aspects of Riegl's thought, specifically his inquiries into the role of the beholder, to bear on recent art-historical scholarship. Thus her book is overtly contemporary in its intellectual agenda... In the introductory chapter, Iversen depicts Riegl as a figure sympathetic to current critical concerns, pointing to his rejection of "a narrowly empiricist approach to the study of art" (p.4), his "cultural pluralism" (p.6), and his championing of the "others" of art history, such as the minor arts, ornament, late Roman and Dutch art (p.18). Iversen's initial presentation of Riegl's century-old writings is clearly calculated to arouse the interest of the 1990s reader, and does so quite effectively." Review in *The Art Bulletin*, (see n.70), p.357.

⁷⁴ Henri Zerner made this comparison explicit in his statement, quoted in n.66.

(v) 'The Two Art Histories'

Real problems arise therefore, for the received understanding of the process of migration around 1933. The disjunction between the 'German' and 'American' periods now inserted into the history of art history suggests that the migration of German art historians to America and the subsequent establishment of the discipline there could not have been straightforward. With such a dramatic 'change' in the character of the discipline now posited, the conventional idea of the unproblematic development of a 'Kunstgeschichte American Style' comes to seem somewhat facile. The miscomprehension that now exists between 'German' and 'American' art history implies that the transplantation of art history from Germany to America was much more complex and much more involved than is conventionally taken to be the case. There seems to be a compelling case for a more analytical assessment of the development of the history of art following the migration; an investigation into the ways in which the intellectual environments of Germany and America differed. In what ways did the émigré art historians have to compromise in their work in order to 'fit in' and be accepted in the USA? Was the process of acculturation, and the subsequent development of art history in America, really considered 'beneficial' by these scholars? It must be remembered, of course, that these refugees had good reason for wanting to 'fit in' and their evaluation of their new environment must be balanced against the sense of gratitude and relief which they felt towards their new home and their new peers. From today's more detached historical vantage point perhaps a more sensitive and critically responsive evaluation is called for. If the 'critical standards' of the discipline are now seen to have dropped so significantly following the migration, then surely there is the need to re-evaluate the circumstances surrounding the transplantation of art history from Germany and the subsequent development of the discipline in the United States. I would suggest that there is a pressing demand for a historical re-evaluation of this important period in the history of art history that is in some way more accordant with the position the discipline now finds itself in. With the discontinuity posited between the 'German' and 'American' periods in the discipline's history, there is surely the need for a critical re-examination of both the role that German art historians played in the institutionalisation of the discipline in the U.S., and the influence that the enforced migration and the American intellectual environment had upon their scholarship.

It seems incumbent on our period, in which art historians identify themselves by their 'disciplinary self-consciousness', that there should be a reassessment of the conventional wisdom in which the transplantation of art history from Germany to America is considered an entirely smooth, successful and propitious process. If the establishment of the discipline in America was predicated upon the arrival of the refugee scholars, as certainly seems to have been the case, then one would think that the ramifications of this defining moment in the discipline's recent history would be well researched, well 'excavated', and well understood. As a foundational event in the history of Anglophone art history one would presume that in this period of disciplinary and historiographical awareness the migration would be an area of considerable interest and research. Yet, there seems to be a reticence in English-language art-historiographical discourse to re-examine the migration. Of all the pages recently devoted to exegeses of the discipline's history there is a curious and distinct unwillingness to get to grips with and re-examine this singular important event.⁷⁵ The Nazi enforced migration of German and Austrian art historians was a sudden, violent and hugely significant event in the history of art history. It is surely crucial to any understanding of the recent history of the discipline in the anglophone world. Yet we seem to be faced with a rather inadequate, or facile, understanding of its import and legacy. We are confronted with an outdated notion of this momentous transmission of knowledge which does not ring true with the discipline's modern conception of itself as 'historiographically aware'. Furthermore, I would suggest that without a modern reappraisal of the migration we are faced with some serious and problematic historiographical distortions concerning the conception of the discipline's development in America, and the role that émigré scholars played in the establishment and institutionalisation of art history in the United States.

⁷⁵ The German art historian Karen Michels recognises this fact and has written three excellent, though short English-language essays that do attempt a more contemporary evaluation of the migration; "Transfer and Transformation: The German Period in American art History", *Exiles and Émigrés: The Flight of European Scholars From Hitler*, 1998, pp.304-316; "Art History, German Jewish Identity, and the Emigration of Iconology", *Jewish Identity in Modern Art History*, 1999, pp.167-179; and "Pineapple and Mayonnaise, Why Not? European Art Historians Meet the New World", *The Art Historian*, 2002, pp.57-66. (See also Kevin Parker's succinct essay in *Exiles and Émigrés*, "Art History and Exile", pp.317-325). It is significant that these articles, although excellent critical essays, are somewhat summary. Michels' major works on the subject are published in German (as are the vast majority of those works that do attempt to re-evaluate the circumstances and subsequent ramifications of the migration). See K. Michels, *Transplantierte Kunstwissenschaft: deutschsprachige Kunstgeschichte im amerikanischen Exil*, 1999.

II. Erwin Panofsky: Germany and America

(i) Panofsky and 'Kunstgeschichte American Style'

The problems and historiographical distortions arising from the lack of a recent appraisal of the migration are nowhere more apparent than in the received literature concerning the career of Erwin Panofsky (1892-1968). Erwin Panofsky's shadow looms large over the recent history of the discipline. As a German art historian who took refuge and residence in the United States after the events of 1933 his work and its legacy can be, and often are, taken as the definitive point of reference in any discussion of the different 'periods' in the history of the discipline mapped out previously. Indeed, Panofsky's work and its reputation features most prominently in the historiographical trends of the last 20-30 years. However, in spite of (or perhaps because of) the fact that Panofsky's legacy is so pervasive in the recent critical archaeology of the discipline, the image of the scholar that has emerged in the period since his death remains fundamentally unresolved. It is my contention that the unresolved conception of Panofsky's oeuvre that has emerged in the past few decades both reflects and sustains the problematic sense of miscomprehension that now exists between 'German' and 'American' art history.

Panofsky is regularly described as the most famous and the most influential art historian of the 20th Century.⁷⁶ His great fame, his "triumph", as Jan Bialostocki has noted, was predicated upon the work that he produced in the United States.⁷⁷ Panofsky was undoubtedly the most successful of the German émigré scholars who impacted upon American art history. Lewis Coser for example, referred to Panofsky as "...the acknowledged dean of the refugee art historians."⁷⁸ His name has become synonymous therefore, with the tradition of American art history that developed

⁷⁶ See any one of the many obituaries dedicated to Panofsky, J. A. Emmens, "Erwin Panofsky as a Humanist", *Simiolus*, ii, 1967-68; J. Bialostocki, "Erwin Panofsky: Thinker Historian, Human Being", *Simiolus, Kunsthistorisch tijdschrift*, 4, 1970, pp.68-89; E. Gombrich, "Erwin Panofsky, Obituary", *Burlington Magazine*, 110, June: 1968, pp.357-360; H. W. Janson, "Erwin Panofsky", *American Philosophical Quarterly*, 1968, pp.151-160; R. W. Lee, "Erwin Panofsky", *Art Journal*, 27:4, Summer: 1968, pp.368-370; W. Hecksher, "Erwin Panofsky: a Curriculum Vitae" (A paper read at the symposium held at Princeton University on March 15th 1969, to mark the first anniversary of Erwin Panofsky's death), republished in *Three Essays on Style*, ed. I. Lavin, 1997, pp.169-198.

Although it is of course the nature of the dedicatory obituary to be laudatory, one does get the overwhelming impression that Panofsky was held in an unparalleled esteem, as some kind of intellectual patriarch of the discipline in the English speaking world.

⁷⁷ "(II)is triumph came only when Panofsky began, from 1931 on, to teach in America and when, from 1933 on, he began to write and to publish in English." Jan Bialostocki, *ibid*, p.68.

⁷⁸ L. Coser, *Refugee Scholars in America: Their Impact and Their Experiences*, 1984, p.257.

following the migration. William Heckscher, for example, noted of Panofsky, "It is no exaggeration to say that every publication influenced the development and, more often than not, determined the direction of his chosen discipline, the history of art. His oeuvre faithfully mirrors the growth of art history as a scholarly discipline."⁷⁹ And Norman Cantor has stated more recently, "(Panofsky) became the unchallenged academic powerbroker in art history in the United States...Everything he touched turned into a triumph...he almost single-handedly legitimated a new discipline."⁸⁰

Panofsky introduced iconography, now the standard methodology in traditional art-historical practice, to an American audience in 1939.⁸¹ The famous introduction to his 'Studies in Iconology', in which he outlines the methodology, is often read as the programmatic formulation of 'how to do' art history. It is generally taken to be the authoritative statement of disciplinary procedure, involving the elucidation of the meaning of an artwork through its study in its historical context. Many practicing art historians in the English-speaking world even today, almost 40 years after Panofsky's death, owe their methodology to him, whether they realise it or not.

As the study of works of art and their meaning, based upon the examination of relevant historical documentation, iconography was rapidly accepted in the Anglophone world as the practical means with which to 'do' art history. It became commonplace thereafter for art-historical studies to involve the examination of literary sources and the investigation of religious, political and social ideas relevant to the contextual exegesis of the artwork. Iconography was generally adopted as the standard method for the discipline.⁸² Those involved in the historical study of art could pursue their disciplinary interests therefore, by tracing relevant historical documents, by learning and utilising ancient languages, and by decoding different iconographical motifs from the past. In this understanding iconography is akin to detective work, with set procedures used to 'uncover' the meaning of a work of art.

⁷⁹ Heckscher, p.172.

⁸⁰ N. Cantor, *Inventing the Middle Ages: The Lives, Works and Ideas of the Great Medievalists of the Twentieth Century*, 1991, pp.174-176.

⁸¹ E. Panofsky, *Studies in Iconology: Humanistic Themes in the Art of the Renaissance*, 1939. Panofsky did not invent the term or the methodology himself. Creighton Gilbert noted however that "(Studies in Iconology) marks an epoch in the study of the history of art in America, since it introduced in a fully developed state a technique which had developed gradually abroad." C. Gilbert, "On Subject and Non-Subject in Italian Pictures", *The Art Bulletin*, 34, 1952, p.202. For a comprehensive history of the terms 'Iconography' and 'Iconology' see J. Bialostocki, "Iconography and Iconology", *Encyclopaedia of World Art*, Vol. 7, 1959-68, pp.770-786.

⁸² Heckscher writes, "Studies in Iconology marked the turning point at which iconology ceased to be an ancillary discipline and became an indispensable part of art historical method." p.185.

Panofsky's methodology was received enthusiastically by an eager American studentship from the 1940s onwards as many found in iconography the *modus operandi* with which to engage the work of art.⁸³ Irving Lavin, a student of Panofsky in America, provides a telling first-hand account of the impact of Panofsky's art historical programme. Of his student days Lavin recalls,

The cri de guerre was iconography, the study of the subject matter of works of art that revealed their intellectual 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.

Interestingly, Lavin goes on to remember more generally the,

...fruitful pedagogical technique of our teachers – those miraculously translated Elijahs bringing the good word from the Old World to the New – which reflected the standards of what would now be called 'positivistic' *Kunstwissenschaft*. Panofsky would hand over to every member of his seminars a specific new idea or discovery of his own, just waiting for the enterprising student to work up into an article.⁸⁴

As a systematic art-historical apparatus, Iconography played a vital role in justifying art history as a serious intellectual pursuit; an independent area of humanistic study. It is evident that as a rigorous, consistent and practicable

⁸³ Brendan Cassidy for example, notes that, "Panofsky's iconology was infectious" in B. Cassidy, *Iconography at the Crossroads*, 1993, p.6. It is important to note at this point that in my understanding, Cassidy, like many others, makes no real distinction between the usages of the terms 'Iconography' and 'Iconology'. Norman Cantor is another, for example, who writes, "In the 1930s there was held to be a subtle distinction between these terms (iconography and iconology), but since the 1960s their meanings have been practically synonymous, and the terms are used interchangeably." (Cantor, p.162) I would contend that this lack of discrimination is part of the problematic concerning the intentions of Panofsky in the USA, and I will analyse this in greater detail later in this discussion.

⁸⁴ I. Lavin, "Theory in my Time", *The Art Bulletin*, 78:1, March: 1996, p.13.

methodology, Iconography was seen to segue smoothly into the prevailing ethos of American university education. Part of the reason for this, as Lavin's remarks make clear, was that it was considered 'democratic', dependent upon the individual practitioner's intellectual acumen, as opposed to their social standing. Art history became open to all.

In his years spent at Princeton following the migration, Panofsky led by example. Putting his methodology into practice he quickly learned to write and to think in English, and he produced a series of publications that are exemplary of this period of American art history.⁸⁵ Panofsky's 'The Life and Art of Albrecht Dürer' (1943), was the first of a series of publications that made this scholar famous in the United States. These texts are now considered 'classics' of the history of art written in the English language. Ernst Gombrich considered Panofsky's Dürer book to be "the most rounded monograph on an artist written in our time."⁸⁶ And more recently Keith Moxey has attested to its immense impact and continuing influence, stating, "Panofsky's book on Dürer fundamentally structured the course of post-war studies on this artist."⁸⁷ With 'Early Netherlandish Painting: Its Origin and its Character', published ten years later, in 1953, Panofsky is thought to have introduced the study of Netherlandish art in America. This seminal work has also informed all subsequent scholarship in this area.⁸⁸ 'Renaissance and Renascences in Western Art', (1965), perhaps Panofsky's best-known work, is the standard text on this complex, perennial historical and art-historical problem.⁸⁹ It is testament to the scope of Panofsky's thought that this essay,

⁸⁵ Horst Janson has made a salient point regarding Panofsky's undoubted success in writing in English, "Unlike many other (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." Janson obituary, p.157. R. Lee also attested to Panofsky's extraordinary grasp of the new language, writing, "Had (Panofsky) remained in Germany, the history of art written in English would have suffered an immeasurable loss." Lee, obituary, p.369.

⁸⁶ E. Gombrich, obituary, p.360.

⁸⁷ K. Moxey, "Impossible Distance: Past and Present in the Study of Dürer and Grünewald", *The Art Bulletin*, 86:4, December: 2004, p.757.

⁸⁸ M. Belozerskaya notes, "Panofsky's migration to the United States in 1933 marked the beginning of early Netherlandish studies in this country. To this day his writings inform investigations of individual works, the discipline of art history in general, and Netherlandish art history in particular." *Re-thinking the Renaissance: Burgundian Arts Across Europe*, 2002, p.44. For a more critical contemporary review see O. Pächt, "Panofsky's *Early Netherlandish Painting*", *Burlington Magazine*, 98:637, April: 1956, p.110 & pp.112-116.

⁸⁹ The book published in 1965 was based in large part on an essay written in 1944. See E. Panofsky, "Renaissance and Renascences", *Kenyon Review*, 1944, pp.201-36. Norman Cantor suggests that Panofsky's is "...the most subtle analysis ever made of the great Renaissance issue." (See n.80), p.182.

though published over forty years ago, still remains a defining statement on this fundamental issue.

Though these three 'famous' texts constitute only a small portion of the plethora of studies that Panofsky published in English, they are indicative of the huge and pervasive influence that his work has had.⁹⁰ Panofsky, in effect, set the standard for art-historical scholarship in the English language.⁹¹ The works mentioned here, for example, are core texts for the study of the Renaissance and the Northern Renaissance, and remain crucial reference points in the study of these important areas of art-historical research for undergraduate students and scholars alike. In 2005 it is evident that Panofsky is still regarded therefore, as a seminal and authoritative figure in traditional art historical circles. His work is still considered relevant, even definitive.

The conventional wisdom, based on the success of Panofsky's publications, their enduring legacy and, indeed, his lasting fame, is that this scholar was immediately feted and well sought after in the US as a prime exponent of the European humanist tradition, a revered 'culture-bearer' from the 'Old World'.⁹² In this understanding Panofsky's experience is taken to epitomise the propitious and 'successful' transplantation of art history from Germany to America. In other words, Panofsky is in many ways regarded as the example par excellence of Eisler's formulation of 'Kunstgeschichte American Style'.

Panofsky's own published meditation on the circumstances of his migration is most often read in this light, as a paean of praise for the new intellectual environment that he entered permanently after 1933. Panofsky first published this memoir in an anthology of essays collected from émigré scholars representing different disciplines on the effects of their migration.⁹³ It is better known however, from its republication in 1955 as 'Three Decades of Art History in the United States: Impressions of a Transplanted European'.⁹⁴ Panofsky himself wrote of being 'exiled in paradise' and many commentators subsequently, have accepted this essay in a straightforward

⁹⁰ For a list of all of Panofsky's English-language publications see bibliography.

⁹¹ It is worth asking for example, whether we would have Krautheimer's *Ghiberti* monograph (1956), or Janson's *Donatello* (1957) were it not for the example set by Panofsky's *Dürer*.

⁹² See C. Landauer, "Erwin Panofsky and the Renaissance of the Renaissance", *Renaissance Quarterly*, 47:2, Summer: 1994, pp.255-281.

⁹³ See E. Panofsky, "The History of Art" in W.R. Crawford (ed.), *The Cultural Migration: The European Scholar in America*, 1953, pp.82-111.

⁹⁴ Epilogue to *Meaning in the Visual Arts*, 1955, pp.368-395. All subsequent citations are from this publication. (The text remained unchanged in the more recent edition)

manner as Panofsky's rose-tinted view of the happily propitious circumstances of his migration.⁹⁵

Colin Eisler certainly interpreted Panofsky's memoir of his migration in this way. A student of Panofsky at NYU, Eisler drew heavily on Panofsky's earlier essay when composing his own account of the development of 'Kunstgeschichte American Style'. A selective reading of 'Three Decades of Art History in the United States' informs Eisler's unproblematic account of the 'successful' establishment of the discipline in America and his perception that the migration proved ultimately beneficial to the work of the émigré scholars. Eisler focused his attention extensively on those parts of Panofsky's essay that relate to the perceived benefits and advantages of the scholar's migration. He quotes Panofsky's statement, for example, that, for the émigré art historians,

...it was a blessing for him to come into contact - and occasionally into conflict - with an Anglo-Saxon positivism which is, in principle, distrustful of abstract speculation; to become more acutely aware of the material problems (posed for example, by the various techniques of painting, and print-making and the static factors in architecture) which in Europe tended to be considered as the concerns of museums and schools of technology rather than universities; and last but not least, to be forced to express himself, for better or worse, in English.⁹⁶

Following the logic of this quotation, read in isolation, one would presume that Panofsky was more than happy to have rid himself of that propensity for endless theoretical speculation that was seen as characteristic of German scholarship, and that he fully embraced the 'positivism' of his new environment and the consequent 'practicability' of his art history in America.⁹⁷ In Eisler's formulation, Panofsky was

⁹⁵ Both J. Hart and K. Brush for example, refer to Panofsky's biographical recollection of the circumstances of his transplantation as 'rose-tinted'. See J. Hart, "Erwin Panofsky and Karl Mannheim: a Dialogue on Interpretation", *Critical Inquiry*, 19:3, Spring: 1993, and K. Brush, *The Shaping of Art History: Wilhelm Vöge, Adolph Goldschmidt and the Study of Medieval Art*, 1996.

⁹⁶ Eisler, "Kunstgeschichte American Style", p.605. Quoted from Panofsky, "Three Decades of Art History in the United States", p.377.

⁹⁷ Recently, David Summers has gone even further than Eisler in this respect, declaring that in "Three Decades", "Panofsky had harsh words for the intellectual tradition that he had left behind (and) praise for the anti-theoretical - or non-theoretical - traditions of American scholarship." D. Summers,

entirely at ease in his new environment; and one gets the impression that this great art historian is undoubtedly considered the epitome of Eisler's idea of successful 'Kunstgeschichte American Style'. The fact that Eisler's essay was published in 1968, the year of Panofsky's death, seems particularly significant in this regard. It can be read as a fitting tribute, a panegyric to the most prominent and distinguished 'American' art historian.

Panofsky is still commonly regarded as the outstanding exponent of American art history as it developed as a discipline from the 1940s onwards.⁹⁸ He is generally perceived to be the prime representative, the 'figurehead' as it were, of 'traditional' art history written in the English language.⁹⁹ Willibald Sauerländer, for example, provides this summation of Panofsky's impact upon traditional art historical practice in the Anglophone world:

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.¹⁰⁰

(ii) Reaction to the 'American' Panofsky

As Panofsky has become such a figurehead for the discipline as it was established in America following the migration, it should be no surprise that in the last 30 years, a period in which the 'traditional' conception of art history has received such sustained criticism, Panofsky's legacy has also undergone severe revision. Sauerländer made this point when, after establishing the fact of Panofsky's pre-eminence in the realm of traditional anglophone art history, he declared that in 1995 it was more fashionable for Panofsky to be regarded as "the burdensome father figure from a bygone period of

"Meaning in the Visual Arts as a Humanistic Discipline", in I. Lavin (ed.), *Meaning in the Visual arts: Views From the Outside: A Centennial Commemoration of Erwin Panofsky*, 1995, p.9.

⁹⁸ It is worth mentioning here "The History of Art as a Humanistic Discipline" as another publication of Panofsky's, his 'scholarly manifesto', which is generally taken as a definitive statement of disciplinary procedure. First published in T.M. Greene (ed.), *The Meaning of the Humanities*, 1938, pp.89-118.

⁹⁹ Rensselaer Lee writes, "Had he remained in Germany the history of art written in English would have suffered an immeasurable loss". R. Lee, obituary for Erwin Panofsky, *Art Journal*, 27:4, Summer: 1968, p.368.

¹⁰⁰ W. Sauerländer, "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, p.385.

humanistic scholarship.”¹⁰¹ Indeed, so frequent and so vociferous have been the criticisms of Panofsky’s English language work over the past couple of decades that there is even common reference to the trend of ‘Panofsky-bashing’.¹⁰²

The nature of the avowedly polemical reaction to Panofsky’s American works is evident in the title of Sauerländer’s article, ‘Struggling with a Deconstructed Panofsky’. Sauerländer provides a clear indication of the source of the critical invective now directed towards this scholar.¹⁰³ Panofsky’s American work is ‘deconstructed’ in much the same way as the traditional discipline is taken to task – for being overly ‘positivist’, non-theoretical, and for presuming to be purely ‘objective’ and ‘empirically grounded’.¹⁰⁴

Stephen Melville’s description of deconstruction gives some insight into the nature of the recent criticisms of Panofsky’s works:

Deconstruction presents itself as, in general, a practice of reading, a way of picking things up against their grain, or at their margins, in order to show something about how they are structured by the very things they act to exclude from themselves.¹⁰⁵

‘Postmodernist’ authors criticise Panofsky’s art history for purporting to be ‘scientific’.¹⁰⁶ Panofsky is accused of presenting his art historical programme in the United States as completely ‘objective’, empirically formulated and factual. ‘Deconstructivists’ then take great delight in exposing the ‘subjectivity’ evident in his

¹⁰¹ Sauerländer, *ibid.*, p.385.

¹⁰² The Dutch iconographer E. de Jongh for example, wrote in 1990, “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, p.6.

¹⁰³ Sauerländer also makes reference to the trend of “Panofsky-bashing” when he describes the recent critical reaction to Panofsky’s American work: “The admiration for (Panofsky’s) unsurpassed erudition, his brilliance, and his wit gave way to a vehement reaction against his approach to the problems of interpretation, a reaction taking sometimes a vociferous violence which has been rightly denounced as ‘Panofsky-bashing.’” Sauerländer, “Struggling With a Deconstructed Panofsky”, p.385.

¹⁰⁴ During his lifetime Panofsky’s work and method was criticised – see, for example, Creighton Gilbert, “On Subject and Non-Subject In Italian Renaissance Pictures”, *Art Bulletin*, 34, 1952, pp.202-216, & Robert Klein, “Thoughts on Iconography”, pp.143-160 in *Form and Meaning: Essays on Renaissance and Modern Art*. For the purposes of this part of my paper however I will be focussing upon those criticisms which position themselves from a modern ‘theoretical’ point of view (i.e. after Panofsky’s death; from the point of view of the critical theories that have their origin in literary studies).

¹⁰⁵ S. Melville, “The Temptation of New Perspectives”, *October*, 52, Spring: 1990, pp.3-15.

¹⁰⁶ “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 freed then to imagine ourselves henceforth as scientists of a certain kind.” Melville, *ibid.*, pp.11-12.

work. Catherine Soussloff, for example, has made the apparently 'revelatory' claim that the whole humanist art historical programme, formulated primarily and authoritatively by Panofsky in America, is based upon a resistance to the subjectivity of the author. Writing specifically about the Anglophone conception of "art history as a humanistic discipline - to invoke the title of a famous essay by Erwin Panofsky", Soussloff proclaims, "its strength as myth is found in the resistance to the exploration of issues of identity and subjectivity in the discipline as a whole."¹⁰⁷ Panofsky becomes a target for postmodernist critiques therefore, because he is adjudged to actively resist exploration of the issue of his own subjectivity as an author. His work is therefore open to 'deconstruction', as writers seek to expound the subjectivity that is inherent in, and which informs his work.

Keith Moxey, a contemporary 'post-modernist' writer, repeatedly takes Panofsky's American publications to task. Indeed, Moxey uses the work of the great émigré scholar as an exemplar for his critique of the discipline as a whole. In a series of articles written over the past twenty years, Moxey has 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."¹⁰⁸ Moxey considers Panofsky's art history to be typical of, in fact central to, that now disparaged tradition of American art history, "carried on in a positivistic spirit through empirical research."¹⁰⁹ Moxey believes Panofsky's iconological programme has to be 'deconstructed' because it presents the erroneous view that art historical interpretations can be presented in an unmediated fashion, as completely 'detached' and 'objective' statements, and that the art historian can therefore consider themselves freed from the need to consider the theoretical exigencies of his practice.¹¹⁰ According to Moxey,

¹⁰⁷ C. Soussloff, "Projecting Culture: Jewish Art Historians and the History of Art History", in *Judaism: A Quarterly Journal of Jewish Life and Thought*, 49:3, Summer: 2000, p.51.

¹⁰⁸ K. Moxey, "Impossible Distance: Past and Present in the Study of Dürer and Grünewald", *The Art Bulletin*, 86:1, December: 2004, pp.750-763 (quote pp.757-8). See also: "Motivating History", *The Art Bulletin*, 77:3, September: 1995, pp.392-401; "Perspective, Panofsky and the Philosophy of History", *New Literary History*, 26, Autumn: 1995, pp.775-786; "Panofsky's Melancholia" in *The Practice of Theory*, 1994, chp.4, pp.65-78; "The Politics of Iconology", in *Iconography at the Crossroads*, B. Cassidy (ed), 1990, pp.27-31, & "Panofsky's Concept of 'Iconology' and the Problem of Interpretation in the History of Art", *New Literary History*, 17, 1986, pp.265-274;

¹⁰⁹ K. Moxey, "Panofsky's Melancholia", p.65. Elsewhere Moxey denigrates Panofsky's output in the US as "an art history absorbed by a positivistic obsession with information." - "Motivating History", p.396.

¹¹⁰ For this view see especially, K. Moxey, "Panofsky's Concept of Iconology", and "Perspective, Panofsky and the Philosophy of History".

The tone of Panofsky's writings and those of many of his followers has a lapidary quality that suggests that 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 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.¹¹¹

As Brendan Cassidy has noted, "Moxey accuses Iconology of operating in the context of a correspondence theory of truth that claims for itself access to historical fact. In adopting this superior position Iconology promotes the fiction that its conclusions are unmediated and non-ideological."¹¹² In Moxey's view, the rhetoric of Panofsky's iconological system, which invests it "with an air of authoritarian finality",¹¹³ proves ultimately empty, akin to some kind of intellectual sophistry. He seeks to expose its fallacy in light of the fundamental deconstructivist credo, that all knowledge must be acknowledged to be mediated.¹¹⁴

As a scholar who specialises in the art of the Northern Renaissance it should be no surprise that Moxey takes particular exception to Panofsky's work in this area.¹¹⁵ Although Moxey recognises the power of his predecessor's text on Dürer¹¹⁶, he criticises Panofsky's approach, because "his analysis is presented as historical 'truth' rather than as contingent historical interpretation."¹¹⁷ Likewise, in a separate critique of Panofsky's Dürer book and 'Early Netherlandish Painting', Moxey writes, "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 detailed and learned accounts of the available historical evidence, which is pursued with a relentless 'objectivity'."¹¹⁸ These 'classic' textbooks are regarded by Moxey as prime examples of 'traditional' art historical practice, in which the art historian is concerned

¹¹¹ K. Moxey, "Panofsky's Concept of Iconology", p.269.

¹¹² B. Cassidy, Introduction to *Iconography at the Crossroads*, p.6. It is worth noting here that this book by Cassidy provides further evidence of the widespread and often censorious critical re-evaluation which Panofsky's American work has undergone in recent decades.

¹¹³ K. Moxey, "Panofsky's Concept of Iconology", p.269.

¹¹⁴ Elsewhere Moxey writes, "(Panofsky's) subtle and effective method of historical interpretation succeeded because it obliterated questions related to the subjectivity of the author." "Motivating History", p.397.

¹¹⁵ See especially, "Panofsky's Melancholia" and "Impossible Distance".

¹¹⁶ See n.87.

¹¹⁷ K. Moxey, "Panofsky's Melancholia", p.78.

¹¹⁸ K. Moxey, "Motivating History", p.395.

only with the empirically garnered 'facts', and ignorant of the theoretical presuppositions which inform his interpretations.

It is obvious that Moxey considers Panofsky to be responsible for the tradition of art history that developed after the migration; a tradition against which Moxey takes an avowedly critical stance.¹¹⁹ Panofsky's "banishment of subjectivity" in favour of (what is from Moxey's point of view) an insipid and critically weak notion of the 'objectivity' of his scholarship, i.e. art history conceived of as a 'science', becomes a central quintain in the post-modern critique of art history. The huge influence of Panofsky's iconographic method, his fame and his lasting legacy in 'traditional' art historical circles, make him an obvious target. Through the repeated claims that Panofsky was a 'positivist' art historian (with all the negative connotations that this term has in recent discourse) he is identified, by Moxey and others, as a 'source point' for the critical invective now aimed at the 'traditional' discipline as a whole. As Sauerländer noted, in the statement quoted from above, in the past couple of decades Panofsky's reputation, based centrally upon the work that he produced in the United States, has undergone a comprehensive and often severe critical re-evaluation and admonishment.

(iii) Renaissance of the 'German' Panofsky

All this might seem like the straightforward and natural consequence of the critical revisionism that characterises much contemporary art-historical discourse, i.e. that Panofsky, recognised as the figurehead for the discipline as it developed in the English-speaking world, becomes, in effect, an intellectual pariah in the reaction to this tradition. But the conception of Panofsky's scholarship as a whole that has emerged in the past few decades is obfuscated as a result of the other side of this recent disciplinary 'reaction'. In the historiographical 'renaissance' of the period of art history in Germany before the migration, Panofsky is now regarded as a crucial figure, an important critical and theoretical writer, whose work is now recognised as being integral to the understanding of this now eulogised era. Coincident with those critical attacks on Panofsky's well-known American work, the scholar's earlier German-language publications have been 'rediscovered' and reappraised as part of the

¹¹⁹ Moxey writes for example, of how "Panofsky's banishment of subjectivity in favour of a positivist objectivity...proved deeply influential." "Motivating History", p.397.

nostalgic historiographical excavation of the 'golden' 'German' period in the discipline's history.

In the past 25 years, Panofsky's early essays have received an unprecedented amount of attention amongst English-speaking art historians, for their concern with establishing a theoretical basis upon which an art-historical practice could be based. Indeed, Panofsky's German writing has even been considered a kind of 'ideal' art history to which 'new' art historians should aspire.¹²⁰

Panofsky's work is identified as the important culminating point of that particularly Germanic, critical, art-historical tradition which Michael Podro demarcated as the subject of his book in 1982. Panofsky is acknowledged therefore, as one of those 'Critical Historians of Art' who openly confronted the theoretical difficulties of creating an epistemological basis for the study of art. His German works are 'revived' as part of that explicit reaction to traditional art history in the Anglophone world.¹²¹

In 1984 Michael Ann Holly cemented Panofsky's place in this critical, historiographical 'renaissance' with the publication of her acclaimed book 'Panofsky and the Foundations of Art History'.¹²² This seminal work was devoted exclusively to analysis of Panofsky's early German-language theoretical essays, in an attempt to make them accessible to a modern generation familiar only with the scholar's American work.¹²³ In Holly's analysis Panofsky's work is integral to any understanding of the German period of critical art history. His German writing is

¹²⁰ T.J. Clark for example, puts Panofsky on a pedestal as an 'ideal' art historian in his seminal essay, "The Conditions of Artistic Creation". Clark makes it explicit that any 'new' art history should aspire to the type of critical thinking that was evidenced in Panofsky's German works. (Clark refers specifically to Panofsky's *Perspective as Symbolic Form*, (pub. 1927)). For an excellent summation of Clark's essay, and his valorisation of Panofsky's work, see E. Fernie (ed.), *Art History and its Methods: A Critical Anthology*, 1995 pp.245-247.

¹²¹ See *The Critical Historians of Art* (1982) in which Podro writes, "The third and final stage of the tradition of critical history is here represented by one figure, Panofsky." (p.xxvi). Elsewhere Podro makes clear that the remit of his history of these critical historians ends in 1927, with Panofsky's German language work published before his migration (p.xxi).

¹²² M.A. Holly, *Panofsky and the Foundations of Art History*, 1984.

¹²³ Holly's rationale makes this explicit as she refers to "...a lack of familiarity with Panofsky's early work (despite his popularity) and with his labours to secure an epistemological foundation for the practice of art history." She then states, "My book aims to rectify this situation." *Panofsky and the Foundations of Art History*, p.10. Holly's book should be understood as a conscious reply to Svetlana Alpers lament 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...?" S. Alpers, "Is Art History?", *Daedalus*, 106:3, 1977, p.9. However, it remains the case that, despite Holly's interpretations, the majority of Panofsky's early essays remain unavailable in the English language. They are gathered together in a comprehensive German publication, *Aufsätze zu Grundfragen der Kunstwissenschaft*, H. Oberer and E. Verheyen, 1964.

illuminated as an important synthesis of the work of Alois Riegl and Heinrich Wölfflin, and his ideas are also analysed in terms of their relation to the thought of the cultural historian Aby Warburg and the neo-Kantian philosopher Ernst Cassirer, alongside whom Panofsky worked at the Warburg Institute in Hamburg. In essence, Holly positions Panofsky as a vital and important critical scholar embedded in the vibrant theoretical and philosophical milieu in which the emergent discipline took shape in pre-Nazi Germany.

Sylvia Ferretti also revived and reappraised Panofsky's early German work in her book 'Cassirer, Panofsky, and Warburg: Symbol, Art and History'. Ferretti, like Holly, concentrated specifically on Panofsky's theoretical and philosophical approach to the history of art evidenced in his German-language essays, and nurtured in the intellectual ferment of the Warburg Institute.¹²⁴

The 'renaissance' of Panofsky's early theoretical work, seen over the past 20 years or so is evidenced further by the publication for the first time in English of what are now considered to be two of his most important essays, 'The Concept of Artistic Volition'¹²⁵ and 'Perspective as Symbolic Form'.¹²⁶ There have also been a myriad of recent articles that deal exclusively with the theoretical content of the essays that Panofsky published in his German years.¹²⁷ It is no exaggeration to state that the interest in the work of Erwin Panofsky has constituted a major part of the "re-

¹²⁴ S. Ferretti, *Cassirer, Panofsky, and Warburg: Symbol, Art and History*, translated by R. Pierce 1989. Although this work was originally published in Italian in 1984 as *Il demone della memoria. Simbolo e tempo storico in Warburg, Cassirer, Panofsky*, its publication in English five years later attests to the recent upsurge of interest among Anglophone art historians in the German history of their discipline and in Panofsky's work in particular.

¹²⁵ E. Panofsky, "The Concept of Artistic Volition", (originally 'Der Begriff des Kunstwillens' (1920)), translated by K.J. Northcott and J. Snyder, in *Critical Inquiry*, 8:1, Autumn: 1981, pp.17-33.

¹²⁶ E. Panofsky, *Perspective as Symbolic Form* (originally *Die Perspektive als 'symbolische Form'* (1927)), translated by Christopher Wood, 1991.

¹²⁷ For the most recent articles that evidence this exclusive interest in Panofsky's early theoretical work, see A. Nehr, "How Perspective Could be a Symbolic Form", *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*, 63:4, Fall: 2005, pp.359-373; M. Iversen, "The Discourse of Perspective in the Twentieth Century: Panofsky, Damisch and Lacan", *Oxford Art Journal*, 28:2, 2005, pp.191-202; A. Nehr, "The Concept of Kunstwillen, neo-Kantianism and Erwin Panofsky's Early Art Theoretical Essays", *Word and Image*, 20:1, Jan-Mar: 2004, pp.41-51; K. Lang, "Chaos and Cosmos: Points of View in Art History and Aesthetics", in *Art History, Aesthetics, Visual Studies*, eds. M. A. Holly and K. Moxey, 2002, pp.47-70. See also chapter 8 of M. Iversen's book *Alois Riegl: Art History and Theory*, 1993, entitled "Postscript on Panofsky: Three Early Essays", pp.149-166. The unprecedented interest shown by recent writers in Panofsky's early German work is evidenced even further by Horst Bredekamp's attempt to reconstruct the content of Panofsky's lost 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, pp.1-19.

awakening of critical interest among Anglophone art historians in the German roots of their discipline."¹²⁸

The renewed panegyric interest in the 'German' Panofsky consistently identifies him as an important philosophical and theoretical critical thinker and writer. His German works are now 'rediscovered' and reassessed for their relevance and their perceived importance to contemporary thought. While there may be various, differing interpretations of Panofsky's early theoretical essays, necessitated of course by the interpretive act of translation itself (the act of interpretative volition as it were),¹²⁹ the sustained interest in the early part of his career 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. Indeed, over the past thirty years the 'theoretical' Panofsky has been compared to writers whose work informs more contemporary trends in art historical discourse such as Ferdinand de Saussure¹³⁰ and Michele Foucault,¹³¹ and to semiotics in general.¹³²

The work of the 'German' Panofsky provides a central point of reference therefore in the historiographical renaissance of the early German period of art history. In opposition to 'traditional' art history in the Anglophone world contemporary authors look back to Panofsky's early German work, and translate and reinterpret it as an exemplar of critical art history. It is explicit in the rhetoric of this 'renaissance' that the content of Panofsky's German work, the ideas expressed therein and their significance, have had to be 'rediscovered'. It is implicit therefore, that these ideas had been lost; that they were not evident in Panofsky's English-language publications. The compulsion to reinterpret and to translate Panofsky's theoretical essays, evidenced in the past few decades, suggests that Panofsky's German work is communicative of thought and ideas not previously available to an English-speaking

¹²⁸ M. Rampley, "From Symbol to Allegory: Aby Warburg's Theory of Art", *Art Bulletin*, 79:1, March: 1997, p.41. I use this quotation here simply to reiterate how prevalent the idea of a 'renaissance' of the German period of art history is in recent Anglophone disciplinary discourse.

¹²⁹ For an example of the different ways in which Panofsky's work has been 'interpreted' see A. Nehr's "The Concept of Kunstwollen" (n.127). Nehr takes issue with Holly and Iversen in turn, and their interpretation and translation of Panofsky's German terminology and phraseology.

¹³⁰ G. C. Argan, "Ideology and Iconology", *Critical Inquiry*, 2:2, Winter: 1975, pp.297-305.

¹³¹ Holly, *Panofsky and the Foundations of Art History*, especially pp.185-187.

¹³² See for e.g. H. Damisch, "Semiotics and Iconography", (n.64); C. Hasenmueller, "Panofsky, Iconography and Semiotics", *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*, 36:3, Spring: 1978, pp.289-301; M. Bal & N. Bryson, "Semiotics and Art History", *The Art Bulletin*, 73:2, June: 1991, pp.174-208; R. Wolf, "Some Thoughts on 'Semiotics and Art History'", *The Art Bulletin*, 74:3, September: 1992.

audience. The ideas contained therein must now be considered 'different' in some way from those expounded in his American work.

(iv) 'The Two Panofskys'

What emerges quite clearly from the received literature therefore, is the conception that there were 'two Panofskys': a 'German Panofsky', the critical, theoretical and philosophical thinker and writer now held in high regard for his attempts to establish an epistemological basis for the study of art; and an 'American Panofsky', more commonly subjected to censure because of his 'positivism' and the supposed eschewal of theory from his work in favour of a (supposedly) insipid objectivism. Such bifurcation in opinion regarding Panofsky's scholarship is now familiar in art-historical discourse.¹³³ The common perception is that there is a definite and identifiable 'split' between Panofsky's early 'theoretical' essays and his later 'practical' writing, clearly predicated upon the scholar's migration to America.¹³⁴ Panofsky is adjudged to have 'changed' upon entering America. Keith Moxey notes of the scholar,

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.¹³⁵

¹³³ Michael Ann Holly, for example, writes, "Several historiographers, in echoing the split between his early theoretical German essays and later historical research collated books written during his American career, have spoken of 'two Panofskys'". M.A. Holly, "Erwin Panofsky", in *Encyclopaedia of Aesthetics*, M. Kelly (ed.), 1998, p.436.

¹³⁴ In an extensive review of Holly's book on Panofsky, Yve-Alain Bois comments on the difference between Panofsky's early theoretical essays and his later, more 'positivist' textbooks, remarking that, "Panofsky's 'German' texts and the majority of his 'American' texts are worlds apart." Y.A. Bois, "Panofsky: Early and Late", *Art In America*, 78, 1985, p.10. Irving Lavin makes this same distinction when he declares that, "Panofsky experienced a mental shift after coming to America." I Lavin, *Three Essays on Style*, Introduction, p.4.

¹³⁵ K. Moxey, "Perspective, Panofsky, and the Philosophy of History", p.777. Holly echoes this view when she writes, "...the empirical thrust of the American Panofsky's research ...might legitimately be regarded as a partial renunciation of his early speculative commitments." Holly, *Encyclopaedia of Aesthetics*, p.437.

I believe this now commonly held perception to be extremely problematic because in the historiography of the discipline the image of Panofsky's scholarship remains fundamentally unresolved. It seems unavoidable that the simplistic and implicitly negative value judgement that, from a modern point of view, is posited upon traditional 'American' art history in relation to 'German' art history, is in turn applied to the scholarship of Panofsky. Panofsky's "much lamented abandonment of theory"¹³⁶ is considered indicative of a deterioration in the standard of his scholarship, a decline in the critical ethos of his work. His German works are seen to be representative of that spirit of 'critical' art history in which writers constantly and consciously sought to demarcate their area of study and the possibilities and rationale of their art historical enterprise. On the other hand Panofsky in America is seen to have eschewed such concerns and is therefore considered to have presumed that such conscious and critical reflection was unnecessary – as if upon his arrival in America he suddenly believed that the 'object' of art-historical study and his method of art-historical study were 'objectively' pre-determinable and unproblematically existent. This implies that the 'late' Panofsky, the 'American' Panofsky, somehow naively purports to practice art history as a purely 'objective', 'positivist' 'science'; or worse, that he is guilty of some kind of intellectual sophistry through which he attempts to abdicate responsibility for the theoretical underpinning of his art-historical practice. In this understanding the reaction to Panofsky's American work is particularly virulent because he is identified as the active producer and disseminator, the influential progenitor as it were, of an uncritical, non-theoretical 'Kunstgeschichte American Style'.

From the modern 'theoretical' point of view then, the 'German' Panofsky is looked upon more favourably than the 'American' Panofsky. This engenders the paradoxical notion that Panofsky's German work has more in common with that same critical revisionism that takes his American work to task.¹³⁷ From such a point of view, the idea that Panofsky's work declined in quality is unavoidable. The overtly polemical thrust of much contemporary writing on the 'American Panofsky' gives the impression that the scholar was somehow resting on his laurels in America; that he

¹³⁶ K. Lang, "Chaos and Cosmos: Points of View in Art History and Aesthetics", (n.127) p.61.

¹³⁷ Holly actually refers to this odd 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 toward critical revisionism taking place in the humanities today." Holly, *Encyclopaedia of Aesthetics*, p.436.

abandoned his critical scholarly principles in order to be an unqualified success in the USA. Although such accusations concerning Panofsky's scholarship are, of course, never expressly stated I would suggest that they are the implicit consequence of the idea that there were 'two Panofskys'. Without an understanding of how and why Panofsky's work evolved or 'changed' upon his migration we are faced with such facile conclusions.

The unresolved image of Panofsky's oeuvre is compounded by the fact that in the received literature the 'two Panofskys' are generally treated separately. Holly's book for example, is written with the express intention of bringing the work of the 'early' Panofsky to the attention of an English-reading audience that would only be aware of his later works.¹³⁸ Most of the historiographical literature concerning Panofsky follows suit in maintaining this distinction, dealing in isolation either specifically with his early 'theoretical' writing, or with his later American works.¹³⁹ If Panofsky is the most famous and most well-known art historian in the Anglophone world, yet his 'German' ideas are unknown, and in need of translation and 'revival', then the latter must be adjudged to be 'different' ideas. Panofsky must have 'changed'. There must have been 'two Panofskys'.

The confusing misunderstanding that now exists between 'German' art history and 'American' art history is both reflected and sustained by the bifurcation that occurs in the received literature on the scholarship of Erwin Panofsky.¹⁴⁰ The phenomenon of the 'two Panofskys' is regularly referred to, and Panofsky's "much lamented abandonment of theory" has come to be an accepted part of art history's history. But this supposedly 'profound' change has never been analysed in any great depth. T. D. Kaufmann for example, finds it "remarkable" that Panofsky avoided discussion of theory and historiography in his work in America.¹⁴¹ Yet he makes no attempt to

¹³⁸ Holly states, "I have narrowed my focus to a detailed exegesis of a couple of Panofsky's less read essays." p.13, *Panofsky and the Foundations of Art History*.

¹³⁹ See for example, those essays referred to (n.127) which deal only with the 'German', 'theoretical' Panofsky. Michael Podro also ends *The Critical Historians of Art* with a review of Panofsky's *Perspective as Symbolic Form*, published in German in 1927. Podro is of course trying to highlight the ideas on which the discipline was founded in Germany, because most of his readers will be unfamiliar with them, and he makes no attempt to discuss Panofsky's work in America. So, implicit in his rationale too, is the idea that there must've been a 'change' in Panofsky's work.

¹⁴⁰ Also mirrored is, of course, the idea of a decline in the standard of art history produced in America after the migration - when compared to that produced in Germany prior to 1933.

¹⁴¹ T. D. Kaufman writes, "It is remarkable, how even leading thinkers of a previous generation, for whatever reason, eschewed much open discussion of theory or historiography when they came to the United States...such discussions were absent, for example, in Erwin Panofsky's teaching at Princeton

qualify this statement in any way. It is simply taken as a given. He makes no effort to understand why this 'remarkable' change took place. There is no attempt to re-evaluate from a historical vantage point the effects of the migration on Panofsky's work. It seems to me in fact, to be in the nature of many of those 'deconstructions' of Panofsky's work that they are executed from a particularly textual point of view. Panofsky's American works tend to be read and judged almost entirely divorced from the conditions that elicited them – i.e., the 'conditions' being those of his enforced transplantation into a foreign intellectual environment and how the subsequent process of assimilation affected his work. The recent derogatory view of the 'American Panofsky' is based, in my view, on a facile and less-than-historical understanding of the scholar's 'success' in the United States. We are left to presume that any 'change' or 'development' in Panofsky's work occurred simply as a wilful act of volition on the scholar's part.

I would suggest it is rather 'remarkable' that in this 'period', in which a scholar like Kaufmann considers his and his colleagues' theoretical and disciplinary self-consciousness to be "healthy" and, indeed, "salutary",¹⁴² such a pronounced historiographical anomaly concerning this obviously defining moment in the history of art history, and its impact upon the most well known art historian of the 20th century can exist and be perpetuated. As in the matter of the migration of the German art historians in general, there is the need for a more adequate understanding of how this sudden and momentous transplantation affected Panofsky's work. If Panofsky's work did change so dramatically then surely we would need to examine why it did so; what compelled this 'profound' change. And if there really was the need for Panofsky to 'change' so abruptly and decisively upon his arrival in America, then surely we need to re-evaluate the idea that the migration of art history from Germany to America was a smooth process that led to the straightforward development of 'Kunstgeschichte American Style'.

If the idea of the 'two Panofskys' is hardwired into the rhetoric of the recent historiographical 'renaissance' of art history, then one wonders whether attempts to provide a more resolved evaluation of Panofsky's whole oeuvre have been lacking

from the 1940s." in a review of "The Absolute Artist: The Historiography of a Concept", *The Art Bulletin*, 80:3, September: 1998, p.580.

¹⁴² Kaufmann (n.141) refers to "the healthy theoretical and methodological consciousness that has grown within art history during the past quarter century"; and he states his opinion, that, "the self-consciousness of art historians is salutary, because this attention was long overdue, especially in the United States."

because any such attempts would somehow dilute the polemical gusto that gives so much recent disciplinary discourse its specific character. On the one hand, the idea of 'two Panofskys' supports and emboldens the claims of a 'New' art history, yet on the other, it leaves us with a problematically unresolved interpretation of Panofsky's development as a scholar. Are we really to believe that Panofsky simply lost, or knowingly suppressed his critical perspicacity as a scholar upon moving to the USA? Did he really consider his scholarship in the US to be absolutely 'objective', empirically formulated, 'scientific' and unmediated and therefore valid for all time? Just as we are faced with an inadequate understanding of the complexities of the migration in the wider sense, so too are we faced with what seems to me to be an extremely simplistic understanding of the effects of migration and acculturation on the work of a scholar still generally recognised as one of the most influential art historians in the discipline's history.

(v) A New Study in Migration?

A detailed review of the circumstances of Panofsky's migration would assist the attempt at a more resolved understanding of his scholarship in general. Since Panofsky is the integral figure in the transplantation of art history from Germany to America this will assist in a better historiographical understanding of this important period in the history of the discipline itself. Rather than maintaining that fundamental distinction between 'German' and 'American' art history it is better to provide a more sensitive appraisal of how the migration affected the work of German scholars and how they in turn impacted upon the development of American art history.

My fundamental premise is that Panofsky was consciously attempting to provide a digestible translation of the German-humanist art-historical tradition. He was tailoring his American publications for an American public as an introduction to, and an exposition of, the art-historical tradition from which he came. Panofsky was making a conscious effort to provide a continuation of his art-historical programme in the United States, and this has to be understood in any appraisal of his publications after 1933. There was no 'sudden' and 'profound change in his attitude towards history and method'.¹⁴³

¹⁴³ Keith Moxey - (n.135)

Panofsky's American works must be read as an attempt to provide a nescient audience with principles for a historical appreciation of art. Understanding that such an approach was lacking in the US, Panofsky was wary of his scholarship being considered a 'foreign' or 'alien' imposition in American academia. Panofsky was at pains to present his art-historical project in a palatable form. To understand how Panofsky's work developed in the United States one must take into account, on the one hand, his attempt to present the intellectual tradition that he came from; and on the other, the intellectual environment which he entered in the United States, its differences to that in Germany and how these differences affected the work that he produced there. Only by balancing the two will we will provide a historical evaluation of how Panofsky's experience in America impacted upon his attempt to translate the Germanic humanist art-historical tradition in an American environment.

Intellectual exile is an extremely complex and involved process and any historical analysis must reflect this. I believe there is scope now for a more sensitive reading of Panofsky's enforced migration and his process of acculturation; one that goes beyond a facile understanding of his seemingly 'easy' and 'straightforward' 'success' in America. A recent and comprehensive publication of Panofsky's letters provides a revealing insight into Panofsky's process of assimilation.¹⁴⁴ These letters, often both very personal and private, evidence a more critical evaluation on Panofsky's part of life in the United States, the difficulties and compromises involved in assimilating into what was an alien intellectual environment, and how this environment impacted upon the development of his scholarship. One finds therein, a more realistic counterpoint to the view that Panofsky looked at his enforced migration through unabashedly rose-tinted spectacles, as an entirely fortuitous and beneficial experience.

¹⁴⁴ I refer here to the two volumes of Panofsky's letters edited by Dieter Wuttke - *Erwin Panofsky: Korrespondenz, 1910-1936* (pub.2001) and *Erwin Panofsky: Korrespondenz, 1937-1949* (pub.2003). These two editions deal with the early period of Panofsky's career in Germany and the years following the migration. Wuttke has selected, annotated and published over 1,300 letters from this 12-year period in Panofsky's career. The fact that Wuttke remarks on having to make discriminatory selections from thousands of other letters suggests the magnitude of his undertaking. Panofsky was famed for his letter writing. As the 'arch-humanist' he was a devotee of the epistolary art and the letters collected by Wuttke provide a truly astounding and comprehensive historical documentation of Panofsky's personal experience of migration. As the 'acknowledged dean of the refugee art historians', Panofsky was in contact with a huge number of his fellow émigrés. He also corresponded regularly with the major American figures involved in the burgeoning art historical scene as he sought to influence the development of the discipline from the 1930s onwards. It is most interesting and revealing to note the different ways Panofsky reflects on his new environment when writing either to his fellow countrymen or to his new American associates. Publication of a selection of Panofsky's letters from the later part of his career is forthcoming.

Indeed, upon reading Panofsky's letters it is possible to re-read his more public meditation, 'Three Decades of Art History in the United States: Impressions of a Transplanted European', as a perceptive and thinly veiled critique of the American intellectual environment in terms of its difference to that in Germany.

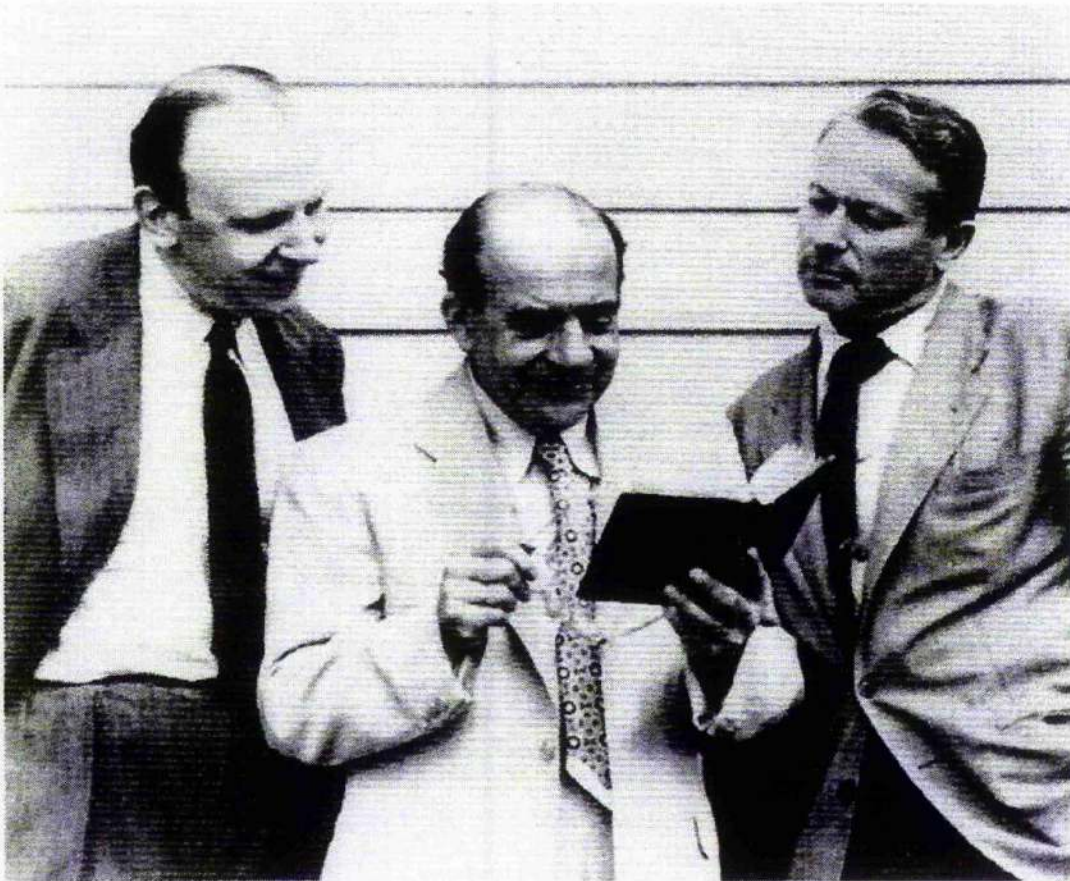
Panofsky's letters evince the thought of a scholar who was extremely attuned to the sensitive nature of importing 'alien' ideas into a foreign country. They provide a genuine insight into Panofsky's attempt to import something of the tradition from which he came, balanced against his need to 'fit in', his need to adapt and adjust in order to assimilate successfully, and his obvious gratitude to those who provided him with refuge from the Nazi threat. Such an understanding of Panofsky's more personal reflections will provide the necessary background for a critical re-evaluation of his scholarship in the United States. Panofsky was extremely self-conscious about what he was attempting to do in America, and about the delicate situation that all the émigré scholars found themselves in. He was a scholar thankful for his own success in 'fitting in', but one ever conscious of, and willing to help, those who found the acculturation more difficult. It is thought that an insight into Panofsky's personal correspondences will, in turn, provide a critical and more historically attuned insight into this important period in the history of art history as a whole.

Ultimately I would suggest that a more historical understanding of the migration of art history from Germany to America will prove hugely beneficial to an understanding of the history of the discipline in general. Modern criticisms of the German humanist tradition in art history have been elicited since this tradition was suddenly and violently uprooted and transplanted into the English-speaking world. It is only since this tradition became ensconced in an academic setting distanced geographically and intellectually from that in which it was originally conceived that it has been subjected to such censure. It is here that the true significance of any historical analysis of the migration lies. The critique of the humanist tradition in art history, engendered over the past 30 years or so, must be recognised as a reaction to the transformation of this tradition upon its transference into an intellectual milieu in which it could not be maintained. Art history as a humanistic discipline was a vital and fully situated living tradition in Germany. The dislocation of this tradition, its circumscription and transplantation into an 'alien' intellectual milieu has, eventually, seen it recognised as 'other', and it has been critiqued accordingly over the past 30 years.

This is what makes studying Panofsky's migration so enlightening. Panofsky was extremely attuned to the differences between the German and American academic landscapes (his initial 'success' proves this point), and his work after 1933 should be read as an attempt to bridge the gulf. The German humanist art-historical tradition is 'realised' in America through Panofsky's translation. He acts as a living conduit, an active agent in the transplantation of the humanist tradition from the Old World to the New. Studying Panofsky's work in America offers a first-hand insight therefore, into this catalytic process of transfer and transformation; an insider's point of view, as it were, on this important period in the history of art history.

PART TWO

PANOFSKY'S EARLY YEARS IN THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA



Horst Janson (left), Erwin Panofsky and William Heckscher.

III. Aims and Aspirations

(i) Early Ambition

From his earliest time in America Erwin Panofsky was keen to stress that he was merely the representative of a German tradition and not the source of what was obviously felt to be a revelatory approach to the study of art in the United States. In a letter to William Ivins, an American scholar keen to learn from the German model of *Kunstwissenschaft*,¹ Panofsky writes,

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. **(305) (March 14th 1932)**²



1. Erwin Panofsky in his Hamburg study, 1920s.

When the Nazis enforced Panofsky's permanent exile from Germany in 1933 it became clear to him, after initial reservations, that the US would provide the most receptive environment in which to continue his art-historical programme. In a

¹ William Ivins translated the German script of Panofsky and Fritz Saxl's "Classical Mythology in Medieval Art" for *Metropolitan Museum Studies*, IV, 1932/33, pp.228-280. The relationship between the two men was originally very cordial and Panofsky invited Ivins to visit the Warburg library upon the American's next sojourn in Germany in return for the hospitality shown to him in New York.

² Figures and dates in **bold** and in **(brackets)** refer to the corresponding letters written by or to Erwin Panofsky and compiled by Dieter Wuttke in *Erwin Panofsky, Korrespondenz 1910 bis 1936* (pub. 2001) and *Erwin Panofsky, Korrespondenz 1937-1949* (pub. 2003). All quotations and emphases are as they appear in the transcription of the letters, unless otherwise stated.

somewhat confessional letter to Margaret Barr³ following the notification of his dismissal from Hamburg University, Panofsky wrote,

I 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. Now...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...a general human attitude which is mature, finished and somehow 'closed'. They would receive a foreigner with hospitality and even kindness, but they 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 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. (396)
(September 8th 1933)

Having travelled extensively in Europe, including visits to England and Ireland, and having been to the USA prior to 1933, Panofsky was obviously very conscious of different cultural attitudes. He was very attuned to the sensitivities of the process of exile and immigration that were being forced upon him. Based on his experiences before 1933 Panofsky believed that America would be the place most open and amenable to the 'German' approach to art. But he also realised early on that in order for him to be a 'success' in America there would have to be both 'give' and 'take'; a process of mutual acculturation where he himself would have to fit in and adapt to the intellectual environment of his new country.

³ Margaret Barr was the wife of Alfred Barr, director of the newly founded Museum of Modern Art in New York. The Barrs were among the closest of Panofsky's acquaintances in his early years in New York, and the letters between the Italian-born and European-educated Margaret Barr and Panofsky are particularly revealing in their intimacy for the German scholar's first impressions of life in America.

Panofsky's anthropological discernment, and his sensitivity to the position in which he found himself as an exile, comes out clearly in another letter, written to Charles Rufus Morey at Princeton University. Panofsky reiterated to Morey his view that the German tradition of art history, which he was so keen to continue, would find its most congenial environs in the United States, as opposed to the other option viable at this time – England:

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 the resurrection of continental methods will take place in America...and I should be more than happy if I could participate, however modestly, in this process. (471) (July 20th 1934)

Having lived and worked in the US periodically for some two years prior to his enforced exile from Germany, Panofsky was obviously extremely attuned to the marked differences between the American environment and his own German intellectual tradition. He made it clear to those he was in correspondence with from his earliest time in America that he wanted to represent the 'scientific' approach to art which was prevalent in his own country. He realised at this point that such an approach was basically foreign in the USA. Panofsky's scholarly output following his migration should be understood therefore as an attempt to provide a nescient American audience with a digestible translation of what was essentially a fully situated and living tradition of art scholarship in Germany. In order to understand Panofsky's own particular experience in the United States we must first assess this 'scientific' tradition, formed in the particular ecology of the German university, and how it compared to the intellectual environment prevalent in America.

(ii) *Kunstwissenschaft* and Humanistic scholarship

By referring to a 'scientific' tradition of art history at this early stage Panofsky was translating his conception of art history as *eine wissenschaft*.⁴ The term *wissenschaft* has, though, connotations that are somewhat different from those associated with the English word 'science'. The *wissenschaften* in Germany denoted all areas of intellectual inquiry, the humanities and the natural sciences. The *Geisteswissenschaften* were the humanistic disciplines in Germany. For art history to be *wissenschaftlich* ('scientific') at this point for Panofsky simply denoted that it was a humanistic discipline.

The humanistic disciplines were the status disciplines in Germany. In contradistinction to the situation in America and indeed, in England, the humanities in Germany were more highly esteemed than the natural sciences. Joan Hart, for example, has noted how "German academic engineers throughout the Weimar Republic and until the end of the Third Reich attempted to acquire the high status of the humanities, not the natural sciences, by using its language and ideas."⁵ Fritz Ringer too notes, "(I)n their attitudes toward cultural and political problems...German scientists followed the leads of their humanist colleagues."⁶

The humanities were envisioned in Germany as those pursuits involved with the study of an 'all' of human culture; i.e. the products of man, such as art, literature, philosophy etc, as opposed to the natural sciences which dealt with the natural world. The importance of studying *Kultur* was fundamental to the Germanic self-conception. Norbert Elias has shown, for example, how the German idea of *Kultur* was defined in contrast to the French or English *Zivilisation*.⁷ In Germany the term *Zivilisation* was taken to denote the outward signs of a limited education; the learning of manners, etiquette etc, those things that could be taught and learned by rote. This was

⁴ The definition of *wissenschaft* given in a standard German-English dictionary reads 'science' and vice versa

⁵ Joan Hart, "Erwin Panofsky and Karl Mannheim: A Dialogue on Interpretation", *Critical Inquiry*, 19:3, Spring: 1993, p.559. For this point Hart relies on the argument put forward in Jeffrey Herf's book *Reactionary Modernism*, 1984, chapter 7, pp.152-188.

⁶ Fritz Ringer, *The Decline of the German Mandarins. The German Academic Community, 1890-1933*, 1990, p.6. Ringer's book is the fundamental study of German academic culture of the period in which Panofsky would have been active, and I rely heavily on his work in mapping out the particular environment that would have shaped Panofsky's ideas and ideals of humanist education and learning.

⁷ Norbert Elias, *The Civilising Process. The History of Manners*, Translated by Edmund Jephcott in 1978. (Originally published as *Über den Prozess der Zivilisation*, 1939.)

suggestive in the German mind of a kind of superficial polish. *Kultur* instead referred to a more highly valued inner condition, an individual's personal development and improvement through lived and learned experience. Following Elias, Ringer states, "'Civilisation' evoked the tangible amenities of earthly existence; 'culture' suggested spiritual concerns. In short, culture reflected cultivation, whereas civilisation was 'merely' a product of man's factual, rational and technical training."⁸ Through studying *Kultur* one developed one's own 'cultivation'

Humanist academics and educators were seen to have an important role in German society. Employees of the State, they were envisaged as rarefied 'culture bearers', a spiritual nobility duly charged with the training of a cultural elite. Within the German university they enjoyed a real scholastic autonomy and independence. Culture was envisioned in a special realm, protected from the forces of politics, and the German university played the role of 'conscience of the nation'. German humanist academics were considered a social and cultural elite. Their extremely high status in German society was dependent upon their learning, their 'Kultur'.

These German 'mandarin' educators rejected a merely practical knowledge.⁹ Through the *Geisteswissenschaften*, the humanistic disciplines, they sought to confer an indelible quality of spiritual elevation upon their students. The ethos of German learning and education was to be found in the improvement of moral character, the cultivation and spiritual development of the individual. Ringer describes how the German universities were opposed to generating 'merely' practical or professional results; "Like 'fortresses of the grail'" he writes, "they were meant to have a spiritually ennobling effect rather than a narrowly utilitarian influence upon the disciples of learning and upon the nation as a whole."¹⁰ This idealistic and high-minded approach to education and learning was manifest in the German language itself. The word *geist* for example, could denote something ineffable such as 'spirit' or 'soul', but it also had a more concrete application in reference to those things in the

⁸ Ringer, p.90.

⁹ I follow Ringer in his definition of the German 'mandarin intellectual' type. He writes, "I would define 'the mandarins' simply as a social and cultural elite which owes its status primarily to educational qualifications, rather than to hereditary rights or wealth...The 'mandarin intellectuals', chiefly the university professors, are concerned with the educational diet of the elite. They uphold the standards of qualification for membership in the group and they act as its spokesmen in cultural questions...I intend to equate the mandarin intellectuals primarily with the German academic humanists..." Ringer, pp.5-6.

¹⁰ Ringer, p.104.

world created by man; the products of man, his culture, was conceived of as 'objectified *geist*'.

The German ideal of learning was encapsulated in the term *Bildung*. The word *Bildung* goes beyond the meaning carried by the English word 'education', encompassing ideas of character formation and moral edification. It denotes a process of self-education. *Bildung* has been described variously as "an inward process of development through which the inherent abilities of the individual were developed and realised"¹¹, and "the absorption of moral and spiritual content as the result of personal and speculative contemplation of the object of study."¹² Importantly, such self-cultivation or self-formation, an intensely personal experience, was envisioned as an ongoing and continuous process of growth that was never supposed to end during one's lifetime.¹³

The ideal of *Bildung* was demonstrated through the student's approach to their classical sources. The student could gain an understanding (*Verstehen*) of these sources only through the mental act of re-experiencing them (*Nacherleben*). In contradistinction to the objects of the natural sciences, the objects of study for the humanities have to be first 'brought to life', as it were, in a process of empathetic understanding enacted by the individual interpreting subject. It is only through the individual's 'experience' of these sources that they can have any 'meaning'. The individual is then improved, or 'cultivated', through their experience and understanding of the moral message contained therein. The German ideal of learning was of a complete personal involvement of the knower with the known. In this understanding, by studying the humanities the students/scholars themselves become humanists.

This humanistic ethos was central to the German approach to learning throughout the nineteenth and on into the early twentieth century. All German students and academics would have gained a thoroughly classical education at the *Gymnasium*, the German secondary school of high prestige. As R. L. Pounds writes, "Every boy and his parents aimed at entering him into a Gymnasium and everything was geared toward gaining entry for him at the age of nine...Every German scholar of note had

¹¹ See George L. Mosse, *German Jews beyond Judaism*, 1985, p.3.

¹² Daniel Adler, "Painterly Politics; Wölfflin, Formalism and German Academic Culture, 1885-1915", *Art History*, 27:3, June: 2004, pp.431-456; p.445.

¹³ For an extended analysis of the term *Bildung* and its meaning and relevance in German academic culture, see D. Sorkin, "Wilhelm Von Humboldt: The Theory and Practice of Self-Formation (*Bildung*), 1791-1810", *Journal of the History of Ideas*, 44:1, March: 1983, pp.55-73.

been trained in a Gymnasium and there was a singular pursuit of knowledge and culture as the objective."¹⁴ Greek and Latin formed the foundation of the education given at the German Gymnasia and from an early age every student would have a sustained involvement with and experience of the classics.

A comprehensive philological grounding and training therefore provided the basis of the German humanist's education. Meaning a love (Greek-*philo*) of knowledge and learning (Greek-*logia*), philology in its narrowest sense is the study of a language together with its literature and the cultural and historical contexts which bring them to life. It could be argued that the humanists of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries were themselves the first philologists. They sought to recover or re-enliven ancient Latin and then Greek. Their increased sensitivity to the inimitable style and character of ancient authors emphasised and made clear the historical distance that lay between them and their object of study. Philology, in its widest sense, denotes the basic humanist activity, through which the humanist/historian seeks to understand the past, as much as possible, on its own terms, based upon the fundamental recognition of the subject's historical distance from the object of study. Such an education constituted Panofsky's early background, and he himself stated, "...classical philology pure and simple is, after all, the basis of every humanistic endeavour." (640) (July 16th 1937) The pursuit of philology signified the fundamental activity of the German humanist-historical tradition. It was the most prestigious subject in German academia in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.¹⁵

Hermeneutics, the method of philology, became the methodological foundation of the *Geisteswissenschaften*, the humanistic disciplines in Germany. Indeed, at the beginning of the twentieth century Wilhelm Dilthey used hermeneutics as the epistemological basis for distinguishing humanistic study from that of the natural sciences.¹⁶ In this sense hermeneutics can be seen as the symbolic form of the German educational ideal of *Bildung*.

¹⁴ R. L. Pounds, *The Development of Education in Western Culture*, 1968, p.229.

¹⁵ Joan Hart writes, "Philology was the most valued and privileged discipline in Germany." "Erwin Panofsky and Karl Mannheim: A Dialogue on Interpretation", p.559. Elsewhere Hart writes, "Philology was the most important discipline in the German academic system in the late nineteenth century." "Reinterpreting Wölfflin: Neo-Kantianism and Hermeneutics", *Art Journal*, 42:4, Winter: 1982, pp.292-300; p.293.

¹⁶ For analyses of Dilthey's use of hermeneutics as the methodological foundation of the humanistic disciplines see T. Plantinga, *Historical Understanding in the Thought of Wilhelm Dilthey*, 1980; R. Makreel, *Dilthey: Philosopher of the Human Studies*, 1975; and H. A. Hodges, *Wilhelm Dilthey: An Introduction*, 1944.

The theory of hermeneutics recognises that as physical objects, historical documents can be subjected to empirical analysis. But the humanist/historian is interested in more than just classifying and documenting these records. As man-made creations, i.e. as examples of objectified *Geist*, the humanist is interested in these records for their 'meaning'. Rather than having 'explanation' as a goal, the humanist instead seeks to 'understand' their object of study through its interpretation. Hermeneutics is basically the art of understanding, or the art of interpretation.

As stated before, the German ideal of humanist learning lay in a complete personal and individual involvement of the knower with the known. In order to gain an understanding (*Verstehen*) of the past through contemplation of those records left to us from that past, the humanist had to re-experience (*Nacherleben*) those records as much as possible on their own terms. This individual act of re-experiencing is necessarily conditioned by the historian's own personal *Weltanschauung*. It is inevitably a subjective process. In order to understand the historical document as much as possible on its own terms, the historian must limit his or her own subjective input into the interpretation process by situating the historical document within a larger historical context. This larger historical context can only be intuitively built up however through the interpretation of historical records. On the one hand the part can be understood only by connecting it to the whole. On the other hand, the whole can be understood only through interpretation of the parts.

The two parts of the humanist's procedure are necessarily interdependent and mutually informative. Studying the historical document gives shape to the historical context. And the historical context itself informs an understanding of the historical document. Hermeneutics was a theory and method of understanding that encompassed the necessarily circular process of humanistic interpretation in order to take into account the individual *Weltanschauung* of the interpreting subject and thus, their historical distance from the object of study.

The methodological circle of hermeneutics is only 'vicious' if one holds on to some ideal of absolute objectivity in interpretation. Inherent therefore within the method is the acknowledgement that historical understanding is always provisional, contextual and subject to a degree of speculation. In this understanding, humanistic knowledge is essentially ongoing, cumulative and necessarily subject to change. The ideal of humanistic learning in the German academic programme was that it grew and developed in a way analogous to the individual in that process of *Bildung*.

Contextually based humanist knowledge itself was subject to cultivation, and as such was part of a relativistic developmental progression.

The theory of hermeneutics reconciled an idealist approach to history with a more overtly positivist approach. The positivist study of tangible, historical 'facts' was conditioned by the more speculative relation of these 'facts' to a theoretical 'whole'. Theoretical speculation was in turn tempered by detailed concentration upon those empirically garnered 'facts'. It was an understanding of the relationship between these two facets of the historian's process that made any humanist enterprise truly historical. Hermeneutics brought these two strands together in a mutually responsive relationship. A self-conscious examination of what one was 'doing' as a historian was just as fundamental in the German humanist-historical tradition as the accumulation and compilation of historical 'facts'. This was the spirit in which humanistic investigation was carried out. There was no definable end goal, but rather a self-critical and self-conscious method that compelled the progression of knowledge.¹⁷

The fundamental justification for the humanistic studies in Germany at the beginning of the twentieth century lay then in the consciousness of the relativity of any historical interpretation. This was equatable with a historical consciousness that acknowledged the limiting conditions of all historical interpretation. No absolutely 'objective' historical interpretation was possible. Indeed, the realisation of this fact conditioned all vital humanistic activity. The past was perceivable as an object of study only because it was irrevocably separated from the historian. The humanist recognised this distance and took it into his interpretive account. Consciousness of historical distance for the humanist necessitated a rigorous theoretical and methodological self-consciousness; a critical consciousness.

This self-conscious consideration of history writing - often referred to as cultural relativism, or under that nebulous term 'historicism'¹⁸ - represented the fundamental

¹⁷ Describing the German ideal of learning at the beginning of the twentieth century, Edouard Spranger wrote of studying "the undiscoverable divine whole in the discoverable particulars." Quoted in Ringer, p.95. Joan Hart has pointed out that the word hermeneutics itself "derives from Hermes, the Greek messenger god who mediated between the divine and mortal, communicating to man what he otherwise could not comprehend." J. Hart, "Reinterpreting Wölfflin: Neo-Kantianism and Hermeneutics", p.295.

¹⁸ Ronald Nash gives some insight into the different uses of the term 'historicism' thus; "The speculative philosophy of history is a result of the attempts made by not only philosophers but also by historians and sociologists to discover the meaning of history as a whole. These speculative systems assume, for the most part, that there is some ultimate meaning in history which can be explained in terms of some historical law. This belief, usually coupled with some form of historical inevitability (either theistic or naturalistic), is often called 'historicism'... There is another and quite different sense of historicism which...(is) associated with such thinkers as Dilthey, Croce, and Collingwood, that all

ethos of the German humanist academic programme.¹⁹ In order to be truly 'historical' one had to understand the limiting conditions of all historical inquiry. Such a theoretical and critical 'past-mindedness' provided the principle standard of scholarly rigour in Germany. To describe the humanistic disciplines as 'scientific' meant that they were controlled by, and subject to, a rigorous critical and theoretical historical consciousness. The humanistic disciplines were therefore inherently theoretical in Germany. To be properly historical, to adopt a humanistic point of view, was to be conscious of what one was doing as a historian. As Ringer writes, "To call a certain historical investigation *wissenschaftlich* is to praise it for its sound scholarship and ...for its pastmindedness. The German historian was not only certain that his field of work was a discipline; he also knew that it was a *Geisteswissenschaft*, a humanistic discipline, by definition."²⁰ For the humanistic disciplines to be described as *wissenschaftlich* in Germany at the beginning of the twentieth century was not to equate them with the natural sciences. Instead it was to define them as that area of inquiry which dealt with the cultural world as opposed to the natural world. It was in this sense that Panofsky was referring to the tradition of art scholarship from which he came and which he wanted to represent in America as 'scientific'. Panofsky was denoting the German humanist historical tradition.

(iii) The American Academic *Weltanschauung*

The German émigré intellectuals steeped in this humanist-historical tradition entered a markedly different intellectual environment in America in the 1930s. The intellectual and academic landscape of America was dominated by the methods and

ideas are rooted in some historical context and are therefore limited and relative. Historicists (in this second sense) also maintain that history must use different logical techniques from those used in the physical sciences. Failure to keep these two types of historicism distinct can lead to confusion." R.H. Nash (ed.) *Ideas of History*, 1969, pp.265-266. It should be clear that I am referring to the second type of historicism, not that denigrated by Karl R. Popper in *The Poverty of Historicism*, 1957.

¹⁹ According to G. G. Iggers, "The core of historicism consists in the recognition that all human ideas are subject to change." He writes, "Historicism has come to be understood not only as an idea but also as an intellectual and scholarly movement which dominated historical, social, and humanistic studies in nineteenth century Germany, and which recognised that the special quality of history does not consist in the statement of general laws or principles, but in the grasp, so far as possible, of the infinite variety of historical forms immersed in the passage of time." "Historicism" in *Dictionary of the History of Ideas*, P. P. Wiener ed., vol. 2, 1973, pp.457-458. Similarly, Catherine Soussloff writes

"...(II) historicism, particularly when understood as the self-conscious consideration of history writing, was a distinctly German phenomenon and therefore tied to the German views of themselves as a people." "Historicism in Art History" in *Encyclopaedia of Aesthetics*, M. Kelly ed., vol.2, 1998, p.410.

²⁰ Ringer, p.103.

rationale of those disciplines that dealt with the physical world, not the cultural world. Following the lead of the natural sciences, scholarly rigour in American academia was classified in terms of a stringent 'objectivity'. It was based upon that which could be justified through strictly empirical observation. This positivist *Weltanschauung* meant that the humanistic disciplines in the United States were largely non-theoretical; they were un-critical, and a-historical in the German sense.²¹ The émigré social scientist Franz Neumann noted, for example,

...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.²²

In America there was, by and large, the feeling that 'science' was in itself 'democratic'. Knowledge that was empirically verifiable, testable, repeatable and 'scientifically' provable, was therefore open and available to all. If something was empirically verifiable it had a reality that existed independently of the individual observer and could therefore be shown to be universally valid. There was also a distinctly utilitarian emphasis in the American approach to learning where for knowledge to make 'sense' it had to be practical and demonstrably useful. The validity of the humanistic disciplines in America at the turn of the twentieth century depended upon the consonance of their methods with those of the natural sciences.

This was certainly the case with the history of art. On the teaching of art history Thomas Reese writes, "...after the turn of the century, it had to compete with the new 'scientific' departments that had established their power by 1905. To survive and grow the history of art in the college of art and letters had to assure its autonomy as a scientific discipline."²³ Christine McCorkel has pointed out how, in an academic climate dominated by the progress of the natural sciences, "Empirical observation of

²¹ Joan Hart writes, "The natural sciences, particularly physics, were the status disciplines in America, not the humanities. The humanities were largely non-theoretical, even anti-theoretical." "Erwin Panofsky and Karl Mannheim: A Dialogue on Interpretation", p.564.

²² F.L. Neumann, "The Social Sciences", in *The Cultural Migration: The European Scholar in America*, 1953, pp.4-26; p.19.

²³ T. Reese, "Mapping Interdisciplinarity", *Art Bulletin*, 77:4, December: 1995, pp.544-549; p.546. Donald Preziosi describes such a 'scientific' approach to art in his analysis of the Fogg Museum at Harvard at the turn of the century. The Fogg was conceived of in this period as a 'scientific laboratory'. See, "The Question of Art History", *Critical Inquiry*, 18:2, Winter: 1992, pp.363-386.

data and testable conclusions - 'science' - became a criterion of validity - a theme in popular epistemology - that affected all disciplines...In becoming 'scientific' (art history) 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.²⁴

As the study of art came to be more and more institutionalised in the US after the First World War, with American scholars keen to establish a 'discipline' of art history, there was a reaction against the elitist trends associated with connoisseurship and 'appreciationism'. Validity of practice was sought through the use of strictly 'scientific' methods.²⁵ This "necessity for emphasis on fact and value-free observation in art history"²⁶ meant that the scholarly justification for the discipline was seen to lie in the 'object-ivity' of its study. This helps to explain why the institutionalised study of art in American universities often grew out of an association with, or as a subsidiary area of interest in departments of archaeology. In the archaeological approach the object of study was analysed as an object per se. That is, it was treated as an innately evidential object which was therefore immediately and wholly conducive to empirical and 'scientific' examination and analysis. There was less concern (if any at all) with the theoretical exigencies of a historical interpretation.

It is significant that in a recent survey documenting interrelationships between German and American art history before the migration of 1933 it has been shown that in their efforts to learn from the model of German *Kunstwissenschaft*, American scholars were most drawn to the work of Adolph Goldschmidt.²⁷ Though the author makes no attempt to analyse *why* Goldschmidt proved so popular in the US, making visits there throughout the 1920s, one must assume that it was because of his insistence on the primary importance of the art object per se and his rigorously positivistic and 'scientific' methods of analysis. In a similar vein Christine McCorkel

²⁴ C. McCorkel, "Sense and Sensibility: An Epistemological Approach to the Philosophy of Art History", *Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*, 34:1, Autumn: 1975, pp.35-50; pp.38-39.

²⁵ Ibid. Also, for a recent analysis of the development of art history in America in relation to practice in Germany see, K. Brush, "German *Kunstwissenschaft* and the Practice of Art History in America After World War One. Interrelationships, Exchanges, Contexts", *Morbinger Jahrbuch für Kunstwissenschaft*, 26, 1999, pp.7-36.

²⁶ McCorkel, "Sense and Sensibility", p.38.

²⁷ See Brush, as in n.25. Udo Kultermann also writes, "After the First World War Goldschmidt was the first German art historian invited to lecture in the United States. This was in 1921, and it is fair to say that Goldschmidt virtually transplanted German art history to America - and this despite the fact that he was still less well known and less celebrated in his own country than Wölfflin or Thode." U. Kultermann, *The History of Art History*, 1993, p.195.

has shown that the popularity in the US of Heinrich Wölfflin's work was based primarily upon his isolation of form, taken as a means of adopting an 'objective' and purely empirical approach to the work of art.²⁸ I would suggest that the interest shown in these two scholars by American art specialists at the beginning of the twentieth century involved a narrow or reductive reading of their work. Though it suited the temper of the American academic *Weltanschauung* at this time, such a strictly 'positivistic' reading of the work of both Wölfflin and Goldschmidt detracts attention from their consideration and consciousness of the historical and subjective nature of any interpretation of art.²⁹

In the American academic climate which the émigré scholars entered there was actually a distinct distrust of theoretical-historical concerns.³⁰ Subjective speculative constructs could not be empirically or positively verified. In this light theory was often considered too abstract and too abstruse to be of any practical use. Theoretical speculation did not sit easily in an academic landscape characterised by a pragmatic and utilitarian outlook.³¹ The emphasis in American education was upon cold, hard 'facts'; their manipulation and practical application. The historians Charles Beard and Alfred Vagts noted in the 1930s for example, that there was little concern in the US with a critical or philosophical (humanist) understanding of historical disciplinary practice:

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'.³²

²⁸ C. McCorkel, "Sense and Sensibility".

²⁹ For a recent in-depth and well-rounded analysis of the work of Adolph Goldschmidt see K. Brush, *The Shaping of Art History. Wilhelm Vöge, Adolph Goldschmidt and the Study of Medieval Art*, 1996. For an analysis of Wölfflin's work that stresses his balancing of the empirical/positivist approach with the historical/theoretical approach see J. Hart, "Reinterpreting Wölfflin: Neo-Kantianism and Hermeneutics".

³⁰ To this effect Alfred Neumeyer asked rhetorically, "Is it surprising that in the country of William James and John Dewey empirical approaches are preferred to a search for a priori laws in the realm of art?" A. Neumeyer, "Victory Without Trumpet", p.184, in L. White Jr., *Frontiers of Knowledge*, 1956.

³¹ Lewis Coser has noted how the German critical, sceptical tradition of the émigré intellectuals was at odds with the 'present-mindedness' and the optimistic outlook of the American intellectual scene. L. Coser, *Refugee Scholars in America: Their Impact and Their Experiences*, 1984, pp.10-11.

³² C. Beard & A. Vagts, "Currents of Thought in Historiography", *The American Historical Review*, 42:3, April: 1937, pp.460-483; p.464.

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...they regard anyone who bothers with (critical or historical philosophy) as an intruder or mystic who is trying to impose something on them.³³

As can be sensed from this last quotation, the a-historical tendency prevalent in America actually manifested itself in some quarters as a distinct reaction to German scholarship. McCorkel states that in the American approach to art there was "a conscious rejection of the Germanic preoccupation with theory."³⁴ The critical-theoretical nature of much German scholarly writing was considered too impractical or too detached to make positive 'sense' in the pragmatic American *Weltanschauung*. Donald Preziosi has shown how one of the most influential figures in the early development of art history in America, Charles Eliot Norton (1827-1908) of Harvard University was "especially deprecatory of German scholarship in the history of art, which he regarded as so abstractly removed from the actual artwork as to be largely useless for systematic and scientific understanding of artistic practice."³⁵ Colin Eisler writes too of how Norton deplored the effects of study in Europe upon his students, from which he believed they returned "...Germanised pedants, ill taught in Germany by the masters of useless learning."³⁶

German intellectuals in America in the 1930s, such as Panofsky, were confronted therefore with a markedly different, even intellectually opposed outlook. The differences became clear too in the alterity of the educational ethos they encountered in the US. Franz Neumann writes,

The radical difference (of the American academic environment) was apparent not only in the intellectual tradition, but in the actual position of the universities. The German universities considered themselves to be the training

³³ Ibid, p.465.

³⁴ McCorkel, "Sense and Sensibility", p.36.

³⁵ Preziosi, "The Question of Art History", p.376.

³⁶ C. Eisler, "American Art History, God Shed His Grace on Thee", *Art News*, May: 1976, p.65.

grounds of an elite...the American universities were organs of a democratic educational principle.³⁷

The democratic ideal of learning, where knowledge was supposed to be open and available to all, meant that those charged with educating the masses in the USA did not have the high status that the German university mandarins were accustomed to. The prestige that went with being an academic in Germany did not exist to the same extent in America. Unlike the majority of other immigrants who were generally from a relatively lower social economic standing, and for whom the move to the US would have constituted a 'step up', for German intellectuals the move to the US meant a 'step down'. Their prestige was left at home. German scholars often *felt* superior in America but in the different intellectual climate, where they were ignorant of the particular rules of the game, they were often viewed in the opposite way.³⁸ Indeed, many German scholars often came across as snobbish or supercilious to their American counterparts and, as a result, struggled to fit in.

Panofsky was aware early on of the difference of the American educational environment. He remarked that it was the role of the American institutions to "turn out the greatest possible number of the best possible students." (548) (September 20th 1935) This was antithetical to the German *Bildung* ideal, where the humanist education or 'cultivation' was regarded as an intensely individual process; a spiritual development achieved through the student's own personal understanding. In America the benefits of education had to be 'graspable', tangible and of practical use. Teachers were more accountable and acted in effect as 'guarantors of knowledge'. Their role was to facilitate the student body with an authenticated information. The responsibility for success in the American university rested with the teacher rather than with the student.

The German émigré educators would have been used to a student contingent which was much more independent and self-reliant. German students chose their own subjects freely from various disciplines; they were free to enrol in the universities of their choosing until they found a particular professor or a particular approach that they felt suited their own particular educational requirements. They were also free to

³⁷ F.L. Neumann, "The Social Sciences", p.20.

³⁸ Lewis Coser, *Refugee Scholars in America*, p.5.

choose the timing of their own examinations.³⁹ This freedom of learning meant that there was a much more personal approach to the educational needs of the individual in Germany as opposed to in America.

Such independence in German education was fostered further through one of the most fundamental premises of the *Bildung* ideal; i.e. the belief in the functional unity of teaching and research. German universities were envisaged principally as centres of research. The expectation was that the individual academic would be actively involved in research⁴⁰ and that this research would form the basis of their teaching. Students were treated equally as partners in this research, albeit with a different level of understanding. The subject, not the student, received priority. The student was encouraged to contribute to the learning process as much as was possible. According to Wilhelm von Humboldt's aim of *Bildung durch Wissenschaft* (education through academic knowledge),

The university teacher is not any longer teacher, the student not any more just learning, but the latter researches himself and the professor only directs and supports his research.⁴¹

This mutually enhancing interaction between student and scholar engendered a consciousness of the ongoing and relativist nature of humanistic knowledge and learning. Students were encouraged to take responsibility for the knowledge they themselves were creating. Inherent in this approach was a consciousness of the subjective nature of knowledge production.

Another difference that the exiled German scholars found in America was that there was not the same stimulus from their students.⁴² Panofsky for one lamented the fact that American students were "essentially receptive" and that the student-professor

³⁹ C. Gellert, "The Impact of United States Higher Education on German Higher Education Reform and Innovation Debates", p.47, n.4 in *German and American Universities: Mutual Influences – Past and Present*, U. Teichler & H. Wasser (eds). 1992.

⁴⁰ This was even the case at the Gymnasium level, where the Gymnasium instructors would often be respected scholars in their own right.

⁴¹ W. v. Humboldt, *Gesammelte Schriften*, vol. 13, 1920, p.261. Translated in C. Gellert, "The Impact of United States Higher Education on German Higher Education Reform and Innovation Debates", p.46 in *German and American Universities: Mutual Influences – Past and Present*, U. Teichler & H. Wasser (eds). 1992.

⁴² Gellert notes, "The American research universities were characterised by an almost complete segmentation of teaching and research, at least as compared to the German tradition." *Ibid*, p.50.

relationship was not “mutually fruitful to the same degree.”⁴³ Émigré teachers found their students lacking the humanist education of the German Gymnasium. The classical background and philological training which formed the basis of the humanist education in Germany was not there to be taken for granted. German art historians were used to focussing on specific ‘problems’, where a prior knowledge was presumed, and where methodological, critical and theoretical considerations (i.e. historical considerations) came to the fore. In America the émigrés found that the courses and the teaching offered had to be much more informative of a more general knowledge. The focus was more often on broad survey courses and the practical transmission of information. Karen Michels notes of their experience after migration, “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.”⁴⁴ Elsewhere she writes,

...the refugees were used to applying a methodological approach where students should not learn to acquire manual knowledge but to focus upon the principle behind the phenomenon.⁴⁵

(iv) Panofsky's Initial American Experience

Although the German and American intellectual environments were markedly different, Panofsky's acculturation in the United States was eased somewhat in that, as far as possible, he was welcomed into a congenial environment, in many ways sympathetic to his ‘continental’ methods. Panofsky had actually been teaching in America prior to 1933. He had been recommended to the Graduate Division of the College of Fine Arts at New York University by Adolph Goldschmidt as part of those early attempts to establish the study of art as a professionalised discipline, based on the German example. And he had taught alternate terms at Hamburg and NYU from 1931 onwards. Colin Eisler described the NYU department in the years leading up to

⁴³ Letter to the philologist Bruno Snell of 27th March 1952. Translated by Karen Michels, “Transfer and Transformation: The German Period in American Art History”, p.313 in *Exiles and Émigrés. The Flight of European Artists From Hitler*, 1998.

⁴⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁵ K. Michels, “Pineapple and Mayonnaise – Why Not?” European Art Historians Meet the New World.” in *The Art Historian: National Traditions and Institutional Practices*, M. F. Zimmerman (ed), 2003, pp.57-66; p.59.

1933 as a "Europe-oriented faculty".⁴⁶ As well as Panofsky and Goldschmidt, other scholars from Germany invited to the Graduate Centre prior to the migration included, Richard Ettinghausen (Berlin), Karl Lehmann (Münster), Otto Homburger (Marburg), and Martin Weinberger (Munich).⁴⁷

Richard Offner (1889-1965) had invited Panofsky to New York as a guest lecturer in December 1930. Offner was a connoisseur with what could be called a European bent. He was born in Vienna and he returned there to complete his doctoral dissertation, written in German under Max Dvořák. Unusually for an American scholar Offner was interested in the theory of connoisseurship and the theoretical justification of his judgements. His theoretical concerns were neo-Kantian and would have been concordant with the philosophical orientation of Panofsky's thinking.⁴⁸ The two men had met in Germany prior to 1930 and it is not unreasonable to assume that Offner must have been familiar with Panofsky's German work.



2. Richard Offner, 1889-1965.

Panofsky soon came to be regarded in America as the leading light of his generation.⁴⁹ He was considered a 'success' in the United States from early on in his

⁴⁶ Eisler, "Kunstgeschichte American Style", p.570

⁴⁷ For a history of the NYU Fine Arts Graduate Centre see H. Bober, "The Gothic Tower and the Stork Club", *Arts and Sciences*, Spring: 1962, pp.1-8.

⁴⁸ For an analysis of Offner's theoretical concerns see, H.B.J. McGinnis, "Richard Offner and the Ineffable: A Problem in Connoisseurship"; pp.133-144, *The Early Years of Art History in the United States*, eds. C.H. Smyth and P.M. Lukehart, 1993. Panofsky referenced the work of Offner in his "Three Decades of Art History in the United States", stating, "Richard Offner developed connoisseurship in the field of the Italian Primitives into the closest approximation to an exact science." Re-printed in *Meaning in the Visual Arts*, 1955, p.374.

⁴⁹ When Paul J. Sachs was considering offering Panofsky a Professorship at Harvard University in 1934, for example, he wrote asking for references from such figures as Adolph Goldschmidt (448), Paul Clemen (451), Heinrich Wölfflin (456), Wilhelm Köhler (457), and Wilhelm Vöge (460). The responses were unequivocal in their praise for Panofsky as the very best of his generation. The only negative response that Sachs received was, unsurprisingly, from Bernard Berenson. One can imagine Sachs confusion when, on top of all the positive responses received, he opened Berenson's cable to read of Panofsky, "LEARNED INDUSTRIOUS AMBITIOUS USES TALMUDIC DIALECTIC TO PROVE THAT IN EVERY FIELD HE ALONE IS MASTER STOP HIS WORK IN MY FIELD IS DEPLORABLE IN ITSELF AND DELIBERATELY UNFRIENDLY TO ME REGARDS = BERENSON." (450) Berenson is known for having labelled Panofsky a 'poseur' and the 'Hitler of art study'. E. Samuels notes how, in response to Berenson's 'enigmatic' telegram, Sachs wrote that it was, "quite frankly disturbing, for all others spoke with unvarnished enthusiasm." According to Samuels, "Panofsky had become Berenson's special bogey-man among the German-Jewish refugees in New York who, he was convinced, had done their 'utmost' to undermine his reputation in America."

career there. Felix Warburg, the brother of Panofsky's Hamburg colleague Aby, remarked, "The interest awakened (in art-history) through Panofsky's arrival here and through the development of the Division of Fine Arts in the leading institutions in the East has been immense." (514) (9th January 1935) Panofsky was popular in America because of his ability to transcend those differences that existed between the German approach to art and the American approach. He was obviously aware of the need to make simple sense about art for an American audience. He was able to communicate clearly and effectively with an American studentship.

Acting as an early referee for Panofsky, Alfred Barr (Director of the Museum of Modern Art in New York) gave a pertinent insight into the reasons for the German scholar's success in America. Recommending Panofsky to Samuel Courtauld in London shortly after the Nazi purge of the German Universities, Barr writes,

It is scarcely pertinent for me to enlarge upon Dr. Panofsky's achievements. What I wish most to emphasize to you...is his remarkable success as a lecturer and teacher during the past two years in America, for no matter how learned a continental scholar may be he will be judged by students in England and in America by his ability to present his knowledge, to direct study and to excite enthusiasm.

Both this year and last his lectures at New York University and the Metropolitan Museum have impressed that most critical of listeners, the advanced student, as have no 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



3. Alfred Barr, 1902-1981.

triumph in Hamburg. There during the past few years he has caused almost a

Samuels continues, "Undoubtedly their teaching was opposed to his, but his belief that they campaigned against him would appear to have been the product of his suspiciousness rather than of fact." E. Samuels, *Bernard Berenson: The Making of a Legend*, 1987, pp.402-403. The episode demonstrates the tensions that existed between the German-historical approach to art and the trends of connoisseurship and appreciationism which were so firmly established in the U.S. at the turn of the century.

migration of students from other universities. 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 and collectors 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. (370) (May 24th 1933)

William Heckscher, a German-born and trained student of Panofsky, who became a life-long friend, has suggested more recently that Panofsky's remarkable ability to ingratiate himself early on into the American academic scene might have been due to the influence of Edgar Wind, another student and friend of Panofsky who had made an earlier teaching trip across the Atlantic. In reference to Panofsky's quick and successful adaptation to life in America, Heckscher "...wonders what part the rhetorician and philosopher Edgar Wind may have played in the shaping of Panofsky at this (early period). Wind, who had spent some time in America, brought to his work and to his ravishing style of lecturing a lucidity and a deceptive simplicity that filled academically trained Germans with noticeable *Unbehagen*."⁵⁰ Heckscher also suggests that Panofsky's ability to adapt his style of teaching to the American scene would have been due to the particular environment the German scholar would have known in Hamburg, a city "uniquely open to the intellectual currents radiating from the British Isles and across the Atlantic."⁵¹

Panofsky was actually in America, working at NYU, when he received notification of his dismissal from Hamburg University in April 1933. It is often related how those in the NYU Graduate Department sought to make the most of the sudden influx to America of the refugee art historians. Walter W.S. Cook, who along with Richard Offner was responsible for the department at this time, is reported to have remarked, "Hitler is my best friend. He shakes the tree and I collect the apples." In the conventional wisdom then, the German-speaking art historians were welcomed wholesale into an academic environment primed and ready to receive their scholarship. But the reality was in fact much more complex.



4. Walter W.S. Cook,
1888-1962.

⁵⁰ Heckscher, "Erwin Panofsky a Curriculum Vitae", pp.180-181.

⁵¹ Ibid.

Panofsky was certainly aware from an early stage that many in America were opposed to a 'German' approach to art, as it was considered too involved, too pedantic and negligent of a direct appreciation of beauty. This reflected the dominance of connoisseurship and 'appreciationism' on the American scene. Panofsky remarked early on, for example, that one American had taken a dislike to him as he considered him "too historically minded".⁵² One can sense Panofsky's own self-effacement when he describes to an American colleague how his own previous interest in the philosophy of art history was "a youthful sin." Karen Michels has noted that many Americans working alongside the exiles at NYU "expressed their general critique of the refugee's 'pedantic' and 'single-minded Teutonic' teaching programme and requested... a higher degree of popularisation."⁵³

Panofsky was, nonetheless, obviously thought to be the pick of Cook's bunch of 'apples'.⁵⁴ He was considered the most prestigious acquisition in terms of the influx of German art historians. Even his future, though, was far from guaranteed in the years following the enforced migration. Walter Cook had to work extremely hard to organise funds for even a temporary lectureship for Panofsky.⁵⁵ The German scholar recounted to Margaret Barr how,

(Cook) tries to raise some money from the wealthy Jews to create a kind of emergency professorship for me for a full year, and since Jews are always ashamed to turn down a gentile when he approaches them on behalf of a fellow Jew, there is a certain possibility that this idea works out. (362) (April 16th 1933)

Panofsky was well aware in this period that his position at NYU was temporary and that his future in America remained insecure and unresolved in the years following

⁵² The American in question was Philip Johnson, a friend of Panofsky's acquaintances the Barrs, and curator of the department of Modern Architecture at the Museum of Modern Art in New York. For Panofsky's remark see, (337) (November 18th 1932)

⁵³ K. Michels, "'Pineapple and Mayonnaise - Why Not?' European Art Historians Meet the New World", p.58.

⁵⁴ Harry Bober described Panofsky as one of Cook's "more resplendent golden apples", "The Gothic Tower and The Stork Club", p.2.

⁵⁵ Cook in fact became infamous for his ability to whip up funds from various sources and Panofsky was his main priority. Felix Warburg donated \$1000 to Cook's attempt to secure a temporary lectureship for Panofsky in 1933. Other donors included, Lionel Strauss, Walter Naumburg, George Blumenthal and Ernst Rosenfeld. The Rockefeller Foundation donated \$3000 for the fall terms of 1934 and 1935.

the migration. His concerns about his prospects are humorously evident in a letter to Margaret Barr of 1933, in which he writes of how he believed it "...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." (418) (November 30th 1933) It must also be remembered that the influx of refugee scholars took place during the years of the Great Depression in America. Money was tight and this was reflected in the scarcity of employment prospects. In this period of uncertainty and financial insecurity Panofsky was grateful for any offers of employment and he admitted to his American confidante, "...there is hardly a lecturing opportunity on earth that would **not** be acceptable under the circumstances." (371) (May 27th 1933) Panofsky was extremely worried about his prospects in the months that followed his dismissal from Hamburg. Writing to Margaret Barr from Hamburg where he had returned temporarily to tie up his affairs⁵⁶ Panofsky noted, again with humour, that

...everybody here thinks that 'America will take care of him', while on the other hand, America probably thinks that 'such a man surely must find a position in Europe'. Thus I am sitting between two continents, which is a place even less comfortable than that between the proverbial two stools. (422) (December 14th 1933)

At one point Panofsky was even so sure that he would be joining the Warburg Institute in London that he set up a forwarding address there. (418) (November 30th 1933) This position never materialised of course, but the example serves to emphasise the fact that Panofsky had to seriously consider any and all of the options that he had at this time. The enforced migration proved so sudden and unexpected that even for a successful, and relatively well-known art historian like Panofsky, the future at this point was insecure and capable of changing from day to day.⁵⁷

⁵⁶ Though it may seem somewhat surprising in retrospect, in the months immediately following the Nazis' purge of Jews from all civil service positions, scholars such as Panofsky were in no immediate danger. Panofsky was free to return to Hamburg, for example, to see to the final examinations of some of his students.

⁵⁷ Early letters, from the period when the Nazis assumed power, are remarkable in that they show that Panofsky, like many educated Jews living in Germany, somewhat underestimated the threat posed by National Socialism. Many were initially of the opinion that the Nazi threat would subside and that they would be able to resume their lives in Germany.

Being temporarily employed on the basis of charity donations from wealthy individuals was not a situation that Panofsky relished in his time at NYU. It meant that he did not have the same sense of academic freedom and the status and security that he would have enjoyed in Germany. Panofsky was also none too enamoured of the situation in which he felt himself obliged to those who were paying his wages. He was used to being regarded as the “well-to-do bourgeois Herr Professor”, and he expressed his distaste at losing his academic independence and finding himself in “the position of a ‘réfractaire’ supported out of sheer charity.” (362) (April 16th 1933) This was a situation that would have been very uncomfortable for a German scholar, one that would have militated against Panofsky’s innate academic principles.

Panofsky also felt himself unable to do any real research in his early period at NYU because of the teaching and workload he had been burdened with. He complained to Margaret Barr, “I cannot do any 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’” (467) (July 10th 1934) Panofsky was often obliged to attract as large a paying audience as possible for the lectures he gave at NYU. This meant he had to make sure his lectures were accessible and maintained the interest of an audience unfamiliar with and



5. Panofsky’s audience for a lecture on ‘Gothic Art in France and Germany’, given at the Institute of Fine Arts, New York, 1946.

unresponsive to a detailed and specialist approach to art. In a letter to his erstwhile colleague, Gertrud Bing of the Warburg Institute in London, Panofsky described one occasion on which he was,

...greatly annoyed by the fact that the course announced and arranged as a 'seminar' at the Morgan Library was used for publicity purposes (partly to give some prestige to NYU, partly to prevent Mr Morgan having to pay taxes for his library) without my knowledge...I am lecturing an audience of 60/70 persons, including 30 chinchilla ladies who are (rightly) tormented as much as when attending the Wagner operas in the Metropolitan Opera. (525) (March 3rd 1935)

Uncomfortable with the role he was being asked to play at NYU, as a kind of 'hired hand', Panofsky gravitated towards Princeton University in nearby New Jersey.



6. Charles Rufus Morey,
1877-1955.

Charles Rufus Morey, known for initiating the Iconographic Index of Christian Art, and the head of the Department of Art and Archaeology at Princeton, had been keen to have Panofsky lecture there from as early as 1932. Like Offner, Morey was conspicuous in America as a self-reflective scholar; one familiar with the European tradition of art history and interested in the theoretical and methodological justification of his chosen discipline.⁵⁸ Panofsky was certainly drawn to Morey and the humanistic environment he engendered at his department.⁵⁹ In an obituary for Morey, written in 1955, Panofsky gives some indication of what

drew him to the Princeton environs, and what made Morey stand out as a scholar in the American environment. The German scholar obviously identified with Morey's willingness to explore areas that transcended the boundaries of a purely positivistic and factual approach to art and history. Panofsky writes of Morey, "...in studying (the history of art) he never lost sight of the fact that, while it takes ten thousand grains to make a loaf of bread, a loaf of bread is more than a collection of ten thousand grains –

⁵⁸ See C. H. Smyth, "The Princeton Department in the Time of Morey", pp.37-42, *The Early Years of Art History in the United States*, eds. C.H. Smyth and P.M. Lukehart, 1993.

⁵⁹ Morey's background was in philology. For a statement regarding his 'humanistic' views on the history of art as a discipline see C. R. Morey, "The Value of Art as an Academic Subject", *Parnassus*, 1:3, March: 1929, p.7.

that, while the scholar cannot evade the task of incessantly increasing and correcting his data (even at the risk of being called a pedant and a specialist), he must not be afraid of interpreting these data in the light of universal ideas (even at the risk of being accused of theorizing ...).⁶⁰ Panofsky quoted his American colleague admiringly on his view that it was expected of the undergraduate that he should "...realise that the vital part of his University years is what he himself creates therein, that he is the architect of his own culture, and that the function of the University is not the imparting thereof but the furnishing of adequate books and apparatus, and well trained faculty counsellors, for him to use in the process which is in the last analysis his personal affair, of his education."⁶¹ Panofsky also recalled approvingly in his obituary for his American colleague, that he "did not consider research and teaching as separate or even separable activities."⁶² He obviously identified with Morey's educational and scholarly standards in terms of their propinquity to *Bildung* ideals. In Panofsky's view, the Princeton department of Art and Archaeology was, under Morey, "a stronghold of the humanistic point of view (doubly important at a time when the validity of this point of view was beginning to be questioned)". He believed that it "served the country as the most effective training ground for those who wished to make the history of art their lifework."⁶³

Panofsky felt that Princeton would be much more suitable for him than NYU, for his continuation of the German tradition of "scientific" art historical scholarship. He was given an interview there in March 1934 and soon after set up home in Princeton, even though he had at that point only been offered a temporary position and even although it meant he had to commute regularly to New York to fulfil his teaching obligations there. Panofsky wrote of his family's new home at Princeton, "...we could not have found a better place to live in and a more sympathetic atmosphere." (487) (October 10th 1934) He also expressed his displeasure at this time, at the circumstances which meant he was still tied to NYU for the foreseeable future, "...it seems that I shall be married to Cook...as long as NYU has the money to pay me. In a way, this interference is annoying, as NYU is neither exceedingly pleasant nor

⁶⁰ Panofsky, "Charles Rufus Morey" (Obituary), *American Philosophical Society Yearbook*, 1955/56, pp.482-491.

⁶¹ Ibid, p.488.

⁶² Ibid, p.485. In regards to Morey's views as to the necessity of research and teaching being a joint venture, Panofsky recalls further, "one of the few things that could shake (Morey's) equanimity was the ignorant and arrogant notion that academic teachers should not 'waste too much time' on research."

⁶³ Ibid, p.487.

financially sound – but it is true that they have a certain ‘claim’ based on priority.”

(510) (December 27th 1934)

Although Panofsky shared with the other émigrés a real uncertainty about his future after 1933, he was privileged in that he was, eventually, actively sought after by more than one university. As well as Princeton and New York, the University of Chicago and Harvard also expressed an interest in employing Panofsky in the years following his migration. As distinct from many other scholars who struggled for work and placements that they felt suited their status, Panofsky’s eminence in the US was such that in the scramble for work he at least had some options.

It was in Princeton, New Jersey that Panofsky would secure his permanent position in American academia. Princeton was home to the Institute for Advanced Study; an independent research institute affiliated to Princeton University and funded privately by the wealthy Bamberger Foundation. The Bambergers were a wealthy Jewish family and the IAS was set up with the express intention of attracting Jewish scholars.⁶⁴ The Institute was inaugurated with the School of Mathematics in 1930, and counted Albert Einstein among its more illustrious members. With Charles Rufus Morey’s considerable influence, the Chairman of the IAS, Abraham Flexner, envisaged a School of Humanistic Study that would complement the School of Mathematics and work alongside the Princeton Department of Art and Archaeology. Flexner was a fierce critic of the American university structure and had spent time analysing the German system. He proposed the IAS should be established primarily as a research institute, based upon the German university model.⁶⁵ Morey, aiding Flexner, involved Panofsky as an expert adviser on the plans for the School of Humanistic Studies from the outset, with art history considered the perfect subject with which to establish the Humanistic School. In a letter to Flexner, Morey wrote,



**7. Abraham Flexner,
1866-1959.**

⁶⁴ *Bulletin of the Institute of Advanced Study*, no. 7, (1938)

⁶⁵ It is significant that Flexner was an admirer of the German university system and a critic of the American. At the Institute for Advanced Study he sought to implement German research ideals. See D. Goldschmidt, “Historical Interaction Between Higher education in Germany and in the United States”, in U. Teichler and H. Wasser eds, *German and American Universities: Mutual Influences – Past and Present*, esp. pp.23-24. For Flexner’s analysis of the American university system see his *The American College: A Criticism*, 1908.

...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 activity 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 tradition of your department) at Princeton." (471) (July 20th 1934)

Flexner became keen for Panofsky to be involved in and to actually shape the proposed enlargement of the Institute for Advanced Study into the humanities. Panofsky, for his part, considered an appointment at the IAS, with the independence of its teaching staff, and the emphasis on research work and related collaboration with advanced graduate students, as the best opportunity for him to enact a smooth translation of his art historical programme for an American audience. In March 1934 he wrote to Abraham Flexner,

I was of course specifically informed of your Institute before we went to Princeton, but had never dreamt that such 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 work and real teaching. (444) (March 29th 1934)

Panofsky was eventually offered a permanent professorship back at NYU on the 4th January 1935. This was almost two years after his initial expulsion from Germany at the hands of the Nazis. He declined this offer however, in the hope that he would achieve his aim of working under Flexner at the IAS. In a letter to Flexner informing him of the offer from NYU, Panofsky specifically contrasted his role there and the offer to make that role permanent with the potential opportunity to work at Flexner's

Institute in Princeton: "...a position at the Institute would be infinitely more desirable" he writes, "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." He then gave some indication of what he thought the advantages of working at the IAS would be, by continuing, somewhat sarcastically, "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 lecture courses of a more informative character." (515) (January 9th 1935)

Flexner's plans for the School of Humanistic Studies at the Princeton Institute for Advanced Study were given the go-ahead on the 22nd April 1935. Panofsky was the first appointment to its faculty two days later. He was given a full professorship at \$10,000 a year, and he stated to Flexner his hopes that the new school would "develop into another and highly necessary stronghold of that humanism, which, as we all hope, will ultimately survive the present crisis of civilisation."⁶⁶ (539) (April 26th 1935)

This was an extremely prestigious commission for an émigré scholar to be granted and it shows the high esteem, in terms of representing the Germanic humanist tradition, in which Panofsky was held by some in America. He was regarded in some quarters as a kind of ideal representative of German scholarship, the epitome of the European culture bearer. And he was welcomed as a scholar who was able to transcend the differences between a German and an American approach to art; one who could present a digestible translation of the study of art history as a humanistic discipline. His position at the Institute for Advanced Study accorded Panofsky a status, an authority and a security in America that was extremely rare among the émigré scholars. Karen Michels points out that Panofsky's appointment at the Institute for Advanced Study was the exception that proved the rule: "On the whole," she writes of the émigré art historians, "they did not rise to senior, administrative, or policy-making decisions."⁶⁷ It must be remembered too that Panofsky's permanent appointment to a post in American academia only came two full years after he was

⁶⁶ For Flexner's humanistic views see his essay, *The Burden of Humanism*, 1928. (Re-printed in *The Humanities After the War*, 1944, Norman Foerster (ed.))

⁶⁷ Karen Michels, "Transfer and Transformation", p.311.

forced to leave Germany. In that time his future had been far from resolved and this was the source of considerable concern for him and his family.

(v) Panofsky's First American Publications

From a position of relative comfort in Princeton, Panofsky issued his first two American publications: 'The History of Art as A Humanistic Discipline' and 'Studies In Iconology. Humanistic Themes in the Art of the Renaissance'. In these works Panofsky attempted to circumscribe and translate the humanist-historical tradition from which he came for a nescient American audience.

'The History of Art as a Humanistic Discipline' has been described as Panofsky's "scholarly manifesto."⁶⁸ This essay was written in a congenial environment in Panofsky's early years at the IAS, and in conjunction with scholars working at Princeton University. Panofsky had job security at Princeton, a prestigious academic position, and a relatively high status among the refugee scholars. He was lucky enough to play the role of European culture bearer in an environment that welcomed him and that did model itself on European or German humanism. As a transplanted German humanist Panofsky was seen to "embody the meaning of the humanities and the cultural tradition of the West".⁶⁹

Craig Hugh Smyth has shown how Panofsky found a congenial interdisciplinary humanistic environment in the Princeton circle of Theodore M. Greene, Albert Friend, Whitney Oates and Francis Godolphin, and their Special Programme in the Humanities (SPH).⁷⁰ Smyth describes in some detail how Panofsky found himself ensconced in "...a setting that encouraged his interests."⁷¹ T. M. Greene for example, the head of this group, was a neo-Kantian philosopher concerned with establishing the importance of the humanities in America, and with the critical and epistemological foundations of humanistic study.⁷² As Smyth remarks, "Greene the Kant scholar, Panofsky devoted to Cassirer; they had much to talk about and views to exchange."⁷³

⁶⁸ J. E. Emmens, "Erwin Panofsky as a Humanist", *Simiolus*, 2, 1967-68.

⁶⁹ Carl Landauer, "Erwin Panofsky and the Renaissance of the Renaissance", *Renaissance Quarterly*, 47:2, Summer: 1994, pp.255-281; p.270.

⁷⁰ C. H. Smyth, "Thoughts on Erwin Panofsky's First Years in Princeton", in *Meaning in the Visual Arts: Views From the Outside. A Centennial Commemoration of Erwin Panofsky*, Irving Lavin (ed.), 1995, pp.353-361.

⁷¹ *Ibid*, p.356

⁷² See for example, T.M. Greene, *The Arts and the Art of Criticism*, 1940.

⁷³ C. H. Smyth, "Thoughts on Erwin Panofsky's First Years in Princeton", p.357

Panofsky's 'The History of Art as a Humanistic Discipline' was originally written as one of the Spencer Trask Lectures; a lecture series arranged and published by Greene in 1938 under the title, 'The Meaning of the Humanities'.⁷⁴ As Carl Landauer asserts, 'The History of Art as a Humanistic Discipline' "fed into an ongoing discussion of the nature of the humanities in America. The essay was part of a highly polemical interchange on the importance of the humanities, the nature of learning, and the function of the university in the United States."⁷⁵

The essay can be read in essence as a summation of the German humanist critical-theoretical approach to art history. Panofsky obviously felt that such an approach to art was lacking in the United States. The essay is Panofsky's attempt to provide the justification for art history as a scholarly discipline, as a humanistic discipline, and a defence of humanistic study as a whole. 'The History of Art as a Humanistic Discipline' is where Panofsky translates and transcribes that German 'scientific' tradition from which he came.

In this essay Panofsky stresses that all humanistic knowledge is ongoing. He stresses the need for the humanist to be actively theoretical and critically aware. This is what gives humanistic inquiry, or all 'scientific' inquiry for that matter, its vitality:

It is true that the individual monuments and documents can only be examined, interpreted and classified in light of a general historical concept, while at the same time this historical concept can only be built up on individual monuments and documents...Yet this situation is by no means a permanent deadlock...Actually it is what the philosophers call an 'organic situation'...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 was known before. In both cases the 'system that makes sense' operates as a consistent yet elastic organism.⁷⁶

⁷⁴ *The Meaning of the Humanities*, T.M. Greene, (ed), 1938. "The History of Art as a Humanistic Discipline" was on pp.89-118.

⁷⁵ C. Landauer, "Erwin Panofsky and the Renaissance of the Renaissance", p.258.

⁷⁶ E. Panofsky, "The History of Art as a Humanistic Discipline". All quotations from this essay are taken from a subsequent unaltered version, published in *Meaning in the Visual Arts*, 1955, pp.23-50. This quotation, pp.32-33.

The distinction of humanistic study, in relation to the natural sciences however, lay in the fact that the production of 'objective' historical knowledge had to be based upon a subjective historical framework. Panofsky was at pains to stress that the distinction of the humanities lay in the necessary approach to their objects of study. The humanist was interested in their sources for their 'meaning'. Such an approach went beyond classification and description and involved the necessarily subjective act of interpretation. The humanist, in distinction to the scientist, Panofsky writes, has to describe his sources "not as physical bodies or as substitutes for physical bodies, but as objects of an inward experience."⁷⁷ It is through this 'inward experience' that the objects of humanistic study are actually constituted:

In defining a work of art as a "man-made object demanding to be experienced aesthetically" we encounter for the first time a basic difference between the humanities and natural science. 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 synthetic and subjective character: he has mentally to re-enact the actions and to re-create the creations. It is in fact by this process that the real objects of the humanities come into being... For it is obvious that historians of philosophy or sculpture are concerned with books and statues not in so far as these books and statues exist materially, but in so far as they have a meaning. And it is equally obvious that this meaning can only be apprehended by re-producing, and thereby, quite literally 'realizing', the thoughts that are expressed in the books and the artistic conceptions that manifest themselves in the statues. Thus the art historian subjects his 'material' to a rational archaeological analysis at times as meticulously exact, comprehensive and involved as any physical or astronomical research. But he constitutes his 'material' by means of an intuitive aesthetic re-creation.⁷⁸

Panofsky goes on to confront the basic epistemological quandary of art history as a humanistic discipline:

⁷⁷ Ibid, p.44.

⁷⁸ Ibid, pp.37-38. Panofsky actually referenced the German word *Erlebnis* at this point in his essay in an attempt to articulate the necessarily individual and subjective basis of the humanist's activity in distinction to that of the natural scientists'.

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?

"The real answer", he writes,

lies in the fact that the intuitive aesthetic re-creation and archaeological research are interconnected so as to form, again, what we have called 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 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...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.⁷⁹

Panofsky actually borrowed the term 'organic situation' from his colleague at Princeton, the philosopher Theodore M. Greene. He used it to articulate for an American audience the process of circular reasoning inherent in the hermeneutic method.⁸⁰ Indeed Smyth, in discussing this essay, writes that Panofsky comes across

⁷⁹ Ibid, pp.39-43. Hajo Holborn, another German historian working in America after 1933, also attempted to articulate for an American audience the epistemological dilemma posed by the subjective basis of all humanist-historical enterprises. Holborn writes, "Whereas the natural scientist perceives phenomena which have a reality independent from the observer, history is only real in the consciousness of the historian...The past is present only as far as it is re-lived by the historian through sympathy and understanding. The central problems of a historical methodology or epistemology hinge upon the fact that an objective knowledge of the past can only be attained through the subjective experience of the scholar." H. Holborn, "History and the Humanities", *Journal of the History of Ideas*, 9:1, January: 1948, pp.65-69; p.68.

⁸⁰ M.A. Holly has pointed to the similarities between Panofsky's 1938 essay and the hermeneutic method as formulated by Heinrich Dilthey. See *Panofsky and the Foundations of Art History*, esp. pp.34-38. Holly though, does not consider the extent to which Panofsky was attempting to translate the German 'scientific' tradition of art history for an American audience.

as "a Princeton native".⁸¹ The archaeological or empirical-scientific study of the physical art-object informs the subjective process of aesthetic re-creation necessary for its interpretation, and vice-versa. The two processes are intrinsically linked in an 'organic situation' (the hermeneutic method) to create a truly 'historical synopsis'. The objective study of the art object is conditioned by its subjective interpretation and vice versa. The subjective nature of the humanist enterprise necessitates that the humanist is critically and theoretically aware

For Panofsky the historical consciousness of the art historian defined his study. A critical spirit, a pastmindedness, provided the epistemological justification for all humanist enterprise. The production of humanistic learning was necessarily an ongoing developmental process.

Panofsky was keen to stress that the justification for art history as a humanistic discipline lay then in the art historians' awareness of their own subjectivity in interpretation; i.e. the humanist's concern with taking into their interpretive account their own subjectivity, their own historical distance from their object of study. It was this historical consciousness, or past-mindedness, which distinguished the humanist/historian from what Panofsky referred to as the 'naïve' beholder.

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 equipment...The naïve beholder differs from the art historian in that the latter is conscious of the situation. 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. He tries therefore to make adjustments by learning as much as he possibly can of the circumstances under which the objects of his studies were created...And he will do his best to familiarize himself with the social, religious and philosophical attitudes of other periods and countries, in order to correct his own subjective feeling for content. But when he does all this, his aesthetic perception will more and more adapt itself to the original 'intention' of the works. Thus what the art historian as opposed to the 'naïve' art lover does, is not to erect a rational superstructure on an irrational foundation, but to develop his re-creative experiences so as to conform with the results of his

⁸¹ C. H. Smyth, "Thoughts on Erwin Panofsky's First Years in Princeton", p.356.

archaeological research, while continually checking the results of his archaeological research against the evidence of his re-creative experiences...the humanist will look with suspicion upon what might be called 'appreciationism'. He who teaches innocent people to understand art without bothering about classical languages, boresome historical methods and dusty old documents, deprives naïveté of its charms without correcting its errors.⁸²

It was the task of the humanist art historian to understand the work of art as much as possible on its own terms. This meant continually checking any interpretation of an artwork (microcosm) against a larger historical conception (macrocosm) and vice versa – i.e. checking the construction of any large-scale theory against the evidence supplied by individual works. This hermeneutical relation of part to whole and whole to part was envisaged as a continuous process. There was no objectively verifiable endpoint of interpretation to be achieved. In its subjectivity, the process had to be acknowledged to be ongoing and developmental. Any interpretation of meaning had to be theoretical at some level. Such a realisation constituted a critical and historical consciousness. This was the spirit in which art history as a humanistic study had to be carried out.

In the now famous 'Introductory' to his 'Studies in Iconology', published in 1939,⁸³ one year after *The History of Art as a Humanistic Discipline*, Panofsky was concerned once more with the investigation of meaning in works of art. And once again he employed a hermeneutic methodology.

Panofsky began by distinguishing three levels of meaning to be found in an artwork; the interpretive strategies through which the art historian can discern these levels of meaning; and the 'objective correctives' which temper the subjective nature of these interpretations.

The first level, he described as 'Primary or Natural Meaning', whereby the viewer identifies lines, volumes, colours etc as people, buildings, animals, tools etc, and their interaction as events.⁸⁴ This 'pre-iconographical description' is based upon the viewer's practical experience; their familiarity with objects and events. Any

⁸² E. Panofsky, "The History of Art as a Humanistic Discipline", pp.40-43.

⁸³ E. Panofsky, *Studies in Iconology*, 1939.

⁸⁴ It is important to stress at this point that throughout *Studies in Iconology* Panofsky had in mind the representational art of the Renaissance (as defined by the subtitle of his book), and painting in particular.

unknown phenomena can be investigated and identified through recourse to outside sources. The controlling principle for this level of interpretation is a knowledge of 'the history of style' or "insight into the manner in which, under varying conditions, objects and events were expressed by forms."⁸⁵

The second level of meaning described by Panofsky is 'Conventional Meaning' whereby the viewer identifies people, plants, buildings and events as stories, symbols, allegories etc. Where knowledge for this 'iconographical analysis in the narrower sense of the word' is lacking the art historian consults literary sources (i.e. in order that people, events, plants, etc, can be identified as stories, allegories, and symbols etc). The controlling principle for this level of interpretation is 'a history of types' or "insight into the manner in which, under varying conditions, specific themes or concepts were expressed by objects and events."⁸⁶

OBJECT OF INTERPRETATION	ACT OF INTERPRETATION	EQUIPMENT FOR INTERPRETATION	CONTROLLING PRINCIPLE OF INTERPRETATION
I-Primary or natural subject matter-(A) factual, (B) expressional-, constituting the world of artistic motifs.	Pre-iconographical description (and pseudo-formal analysis).	Practical experience (familiarity with objects and events).	History of style (insight into the manner in which, under varying historical conditions, objects and events were expressed by forms).
II-Secondary or conventional subject matter, constituting the world of images, stories and allegories.	Iconographical analysis in the narrower sense of the word.	Knowledge of literary sources (familiarity with specific themes and concepts).	History of types (insight into the manner in which, under varying historical conditions, specific themes or concepts were expressed by objects and events).
III-Intrinsic meaning or content, constituting the world of 'symbolical' values.	Iconographical interpretation in a deeper sense (iconographical synthesis).	Synthetic intuition (familiarity with the essential tendencies of the human mind), conditioned by personal psychology and 'Weltanschauung'.	History of cultural symbols or 'symbols' in general (insight into the manner in which, under varying historical conditions, essential tendencies of the human mind were expressed by specific themes and concepts).

HISTORY OF TRADITION

8. Synoptical table provided as summary of Panofsky's methodology in 'Studies in Iconology', 1939, pp14-15

The third (and according to Panofsky the most important) level of meaning to be elicited from a work of art is the 'Intrinsic Meaning' or 'Content', whereby the art historian interprets the work of art as an index of a particular *Weltanschauung*. For this level of what Panofsky in 1939 called 'iconographical interpretation in a deeper sense', the art historian must use his or her own "synthetic intuition".⁸⁷ Panofsky makes clear that this last subjective process of interpretation, towards which the other

⁸⁵ E. Panofsky, *Studies in Iconology*, pp.14-15. See table.

⁸⁶ Ibid.

⁸⁷ Ibid, p.15.

two levels are geared, is necessarily "conditioned by the interpreter's own psychology and *Weltanschauung*."⁸⁸ The results of this type of interpretation were essentially theoretical and speculative. The controlling principle for this important level of interpretation was "a history of cultural symptoms or 'symbols.'" This meant investigation into the 'intrinsic meaning' "of as many other documents of civilisation historically related to that work or group of works as the interpreter can master."⁸⁹ It was at this stage that the art-historian's practice became interdisciplinary. Any understanding of a particular artwork was dependent upon an understanding of other culturally relevant productions. In other words, all real insight into, or understanding of 'meaning' is necessarily contextually based. Realising the alterity of their own personal *Weltanschauung* from that indexed by a particular art work, the art historian is obliged to temper his or her interpretations through consistent reference to other related cultural products. 'Meaning' in a work of art can only be understood by relating the work itself (part) to a larger theoretical framework (whole) and vice versa. The pendulum swing between these two processes is ongoing, it is continuous. This hermeneutical circle of interpretation constitutes what Panofsky called in his previous essay "'the system that makes sense', that is an historical synopsis."⁹⁰

This 'pendulum swing' was also applied to the application of the different levels of interpretation. Panofsky was at pains to stress that although the methods of approach delineated appeared to be "three unrelated operations of research", in actual fact, and in actual practice, they merged with each other "into one organic and indivisible process." The first two 'iconographic' stages constituted an empirical approach to the work of art and were conditioned by recourse to documentary evidence. 'Iconography in the deeper sense' however was the more subjective-interpretive approach to the artwork, and was ultimately conditioned by a critical, theoretical, historical consciousness. The processes were necessarily interdependent.

On the one hand Panofsky was providing a relentlessly practical-minded American audience with the method, the how-to-do art history. The third level of interpretation was dependent upon the 'iconographical analysis in the narrower sense' and the 'pre-iconographic description' being properly controlled and monitored. This meant that an important part of the art historian's procedure involved an 'empirical-

⁸⁸ Ibid, see table.

⁸⁹ Ibid, p.16

⁹⁰ E. Panofsky, "The History of Art as a Humanistic Discipline", p.43.

positivist' study of literary sources and texts. The art historian could busy themselves with deciphering these levels of meaning by reference to those "dusty old documents" described in Panofsky's 1938 essay.

On the other hand, however, and equally important to the critical vitality of Panofsky's humanist methodology, was the relationship of these two stages with the interpretation of 'content'. The relationship was mutually responsive. The 'iconographical analysis in the narrower sense' informed the 'iconographical analysis in the deeper sense', and vice versa. You could not have one without the other. The two parts of the hermeneutic process had to complement and inform each other in order for there to be a properly historical-humanist inquiry.

It is significant that throughout the text of Panofsky's introductory to 'Studies in Iconology' the author actually refrains from using the term 'Iconology'. After being used in the title this word is marked by its absence throughout the actual text. While stressing the fundamental importance (indeed the necessity) of the third level of interpretation Panofsky refers to it as 'iconographical interpretation in a deeper sense'. One can only presume that his restraint in using the term 'iconology' at this stage was an attempt to 'soften the blow' of his emphasis on the necessarily subjective nature of the humanist art-historical programme he was presenting to an American audience unaccustomed to and unresponsive to speculation and theory. The iconological level of interpretation was necessarily speculative and theoretical, and would not have been consonant with the American view of what constituted 'scientific' scholarship.

IV. Acculturation and Assimilation

(i) Émigrés and the Status of 'Other'

As referred to previously, Panofsky's transition into Princeton life was relatively smooth. But he also clearly recognised the alterity of the American intellectual environment. He was aware that his overtly historical-critical, theoretical approach to art would have seemed to many American scholars like a foreign imposition. He was extremely sensitive to his and his fellow émigrés' status as 'aliens' in America, and he did not want attention unduly drawn to this fact. He had good reason to make his process of assimilation appear as straightforward as possible. Stephanie Baron has noted, for example,

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 jobs away from Americans. In a survey published in 1939 in 'Fortune', more than 80 percent of the respondents expressed negative feelings about the admittance of European refugees.⁹¹

To a large extent Panofsky wanted very quickly to adopt the public persona of the easily acculturated European gentleman. He had good reason to want to 'fit in' quickly and unobtrusively

Panofsky was well aware of his own good fortune in gaining a prime position in American academia and he was conscious too of the elevated status he enjoyed among other refugee art historians thereafter. He was also made acutely aware that many other refugee scholars would not enjoy such 'success'. In a letter to the American Paul Sachs, Director of the Fogg Art Museum at Harvard University, Panofsky wrote,



9. Paul J. Sachs, 1878-1965.

I myself am keenly and sadly aware of the contrast between my situation and that of so many other scholars who would deserve it just as well, or even better, but had not 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 (in case I think highly of them from a purely objective point of view) as best I can...but I realize that even a great and hospitable country like yours...is bound to reach a point of saturation. (566) (February 15th 1936)

Panofsky knew that the acceptance afforded him in America was a relative rarity. His success was dependent upon his awareness of the differences between the American

⁹¹ S. Barron, "European Artists in Exile: A Reading Between the Lines", in *Exiles and Émigrés*, 1998, pp.11-29; p.19.

and German environments and his consciousness of the exigencies involved in the process of mutual acculturation. Indeed, Panofsky's ability to adapt and to ingratiate himself into American academia heightened his sensitivity to the impression that other German scholars were making in the USA. He was aware that some German scholars could appear to be supercilious and derisive in their attitude towards American scholarship, and that this could prove a hindrance to their being fully accepted in the United States. Asked by the University of Iowa for a reference for the renaissance historian Hans Baron, for example, Panofsky was effusive in his praise for his colleague's scholarship. But in response to concerns and queries about Baron's intellectual attitude, Panofsky replied,



10. Hans Baron, 1900-1988.

I can say only that I personally never had any difficulties in getting along with him, though I have heard from others that he may have a little bit of that proverbial European conceit which so many immigrant scholars find so hard to shake off. However, I personally, have never noticed this. (1195) (March 3rd 1948)

The work of German scholars could appear overly recondite to their American colleagues, and the émigrés could find it hard to gain acceptance too if they were unable to adopt their approach.⁹² Panofsky showed an awareness of this fact when providing Paul Sachs with a recommendation for the German art historian Paul Frankl, a scholar known even in Germany for the difficulty of his work and his use of impenetrable language.⁹³ Though Panofsky's reference was naturally supportive of his friend, he still felt obliged to include the coda

⁹² In a study of the German religious philosopher Paul Tillich's migration to America Karen Greenberg notes for example, "members of the Theological Discussion Group to which Tillich was elected in 1934 found themselves 'baffled' by his ideas... Tillich's ideas fell initially upon confused ears." Greenberg goes on to note the ways in which, through a process of *mutual acculturation*, Tillich was able to establish his place in American academia. 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; p.67.

⁹³ Eric Fernie has pointed out that Frankl's work was thought difficult and obtuse even in the context of the German academic environment. He describes Frankl's *The System of Art Historical Knowledge* 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." E. Fernie, *Art History and its Methods: A Critical Anthology*, p.246.

It is unfortunately quite true that his whole intellectual attitude, coupled with his linguistic difficulties prevents him from achieving what may be called popularity in this country. (756) (April 24th 1939)

From his earliest time in America Panofsky was himself careful not to appear overly critical of the American intellectual scene. From all accounts Panofsky was also always at pains to stress the fact that he had firstly been invited to the United States.⁹⁴ Although he was in effect attempting to transplant what was a 'German', and therefore 'foreign' approach to art into the American environment, Panofsky was at pains to do so as unobtrusively and as inoffensively as possible. He didn't want to appear ungrateful or unresponsive to his newly adopted country.

Around the time Panofsky was establishing his position at the IAS in Princeton the now famous Edward Murrow, then a young member of 'The Emergency Committee in Aid of Displaced Foreign Scholars', asked him to contribute to a publication documenting exiles' impressions of their new environment. It was envisaged that chosen representatives of the émigrés would present their "reaction to and criticism of American education in the particular discipline which he represents." (517) (January 22nd 1935) In response to this request Panofsky acknowledged the worth of such a study but at this point he refused to contribute. He thought it was too soon, and the environment in America too sensitive for foreign scholars to voice their criticisms of American scholarship. Panofsky replied to Murrow's request,

A record of the experiences made by the German scholars now active in this country is certainly valuable, although 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. (519) (January 26th 1935)

Panofsky was very sensitive to the issues created by the sudden influx en masse of foreign scholars into the American intellectual milieu. It was not considered appropriate or wise for German-Jewish scholars to be interjecting criticisms of the American intellectual environment which had provided them with refuge from the

⁹⁴ See for example Panofsky's "Three Decades of Art History in the United States", p.368.

threat of Nazism. Many other refugee scholars echoed Panofsky's sentiments in declining Murrow's request.⁹⁵ Eventually the young American conceded the inappropriate nature of his request at that time, replying to Panofsky, "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." (523) (February 13th 1935)

In his position as "the acknowledged dean of refugee art historians"⁹⁶ Panofsky was extremely wary of a situation developing after the migration in which German scholars would be seen to be taking American jobs. On the rare occasion that a German émigré art historian did gain a notable permanent academic position there was always the worry about how this would go down with American-born scholars. In November 1937 Panofsky expressed such fears when he wrote to Walter Cook,

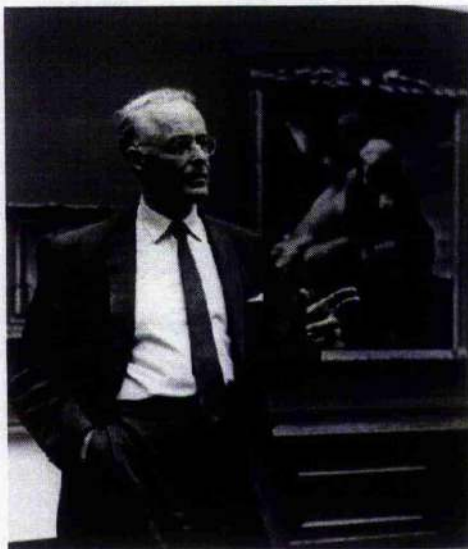
You may know that Dr. Wolfgang Stechow was appointed, about a year ago, as Associate Professor at the University of Wisconsin at Madison. One of his colleagues, a man called Schmeckebeier, has now not been reappointed for the next year and, very understandably, Stechow feels rather badly about this because the whole thing might create the impression that his, Stechow's, presence had something to do with the silent dismissal of said Schmeckebeier...It really would be too bad if people began to think that the foreign scholars were crowding out the Americans in academic life and so Stechow has asked me to help in finding Schmeckebeier another job...I feel that in the interests of every foreign scholar in this country, and of the promotion of scholarship in general, everything should be done to nail the feeling which might result from this rather puzzling occurrence. (676) (November 22nd 1937)

Cook, though obviously very sympathetic to Panofsky's fears, replied promptly,

⁹⁵ In her study of the Paul Tillich's migration to America, Karen Greenberg notes "he did not want to criticise his new colleagues because of the risk that he would 'make angry' his American friends... Those approached as Tillich had been, to contribute essays describing their views of American scholarship, refused, even though the man asking was the young, charmingly attractive and bright Edward R. Murrow." K. Greenberg, "Crossing the Boundary: German Refugee Scholars and the American Academic Tradition", p.67.

⁹⁶ L. Coser, *Refugee Scholars in America*, p.257.

As for the Stechow-Schmeckebeier 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



11. Wolfgang Stechow, 1896-1974.

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 Schmeckebeier. This is the first case I know in which an American scholar has been pushed out because of the appointment of a displaced German scholar. Stechow would be a welcome addition to any department, but I am

afraid that (the head of the art-history department of Wisconsin University) was too precipitate and should have kept both men. (678) (November 24th 1937)

Panofsky was obviously very conscious of the fact that, unlike him, many German scholars struggled to find a place in American academia which corresponded to the position that they had held in Germany. In some cases there was even active discrimination against the German immigrant scholars in the States. In 1938 for example, Panofsky felt compelled to inform a fellow refugee, situated in London, but looking for work in the USA, that job prospects were grim following the migration. He wrote,

As for the universities in this country, the outlook is very dark. 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. (696) (May 3rd 1938)

On another occasion Fiske Kimball, director of the Philadelphia Museum of Art, relayed to Panofsky how he had been consulted about “a good professorship at a certain western University.” Kimball informed Panofsky that he had recommended the German Hans Tietze, but he inquired as to whether Panofsky could recommend any non-Germans because, “...they also want the names of ‘one or two 100% Americans.’” (788) (January 23rd 1940) Panofsky’s curt assessment of three “100% Americans” says a lot about his distaste for this particular university’s hiring policy. (789) (January 24th 1940) The example shows just how aware Panofsky was of the hardships that other émigré scholars faced in getting work, and the sensitive nature of the acculturation process.



12. Fiske Kimball, 1888-1955

Panofsky himself was always very keen that those in American art circles would not consider his own art-historical programme to be presented as something ‘better than’ or even methodologically different to their own work. Conscious of the reaction to foreign scholars in America, Panofsky was at pains to present his work as being as fully and easily naturalised as possible. He was aggrieved therefore by an editorial article in the *American Magazine of Art*, published late in 1938, and just prior to the release of his own ‘Studies in Iconology’. Panofsky was very angry at what he perceived to be the editor’s suggestion that there was a qualitative distinction in the kind of art history he had imported from Germany – i.e. that it was ‘philosophical’. In consideration of American museum practice, the editor of the *Magazine of Art* had written, “During their initial stages American museums were directed in an unscientific if gentlemanly manner.” He expressed his belief that this had changed “with the advent of scholarship and the subsequent influx of distinguished foreign teachers.” He then proceeded to lament the fact that the work of American scholars failed to match that of their German 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.⁹⁷

Although Panofsky was fully conscious of his attempt to import something of the German tradition of art history for a nescient American audience he was nonetheless at pains not to have the impression given publicly that his work was either methodologically distinguishable from, or more valuable than that produced by American scholars and researchers. He replied quickly to the editor of the magazine, with the intention that his letter should be published:

In a recent editorial in 'The Magazine of Art' entitled 'Extremes Meet in Baltimore' 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 my duty to state that no such difference in scope or method let alone in value, can be proved to exist. (738) (November 22nd 1938)

Finely attuned to his, and his fellow émigrés' position as 'foreigners' in America, Panofsky was wary of any suggestion that the exiles thought themselves 'better than' their American counterparts. In a subsequent letter to Margaret Barr, who had also attempted to alert Panofsky to the article, the German scholar reiterated his objections:

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, therefore, written a rather strong, though polite, 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. (740) (December 12th 1938)

⁹⁷ "Extremes Meet in Baltimore", Editorial, *Magazine of Art*, 31:11 November: 1938, p.615 & p.666.

It is clear that Panofsky was extremely sensitive to the process of intellectual exile and acculturation.

The anti-Semitism encountered in the American academy and in American society at large further heightened Panofsky's awareness of, and sensitivity to, his status as 'foreigner' in America. The exiled scholars found anti-Semitism even more pronounced in America than it had been in Wilhelmine Germany. When Walter Friedländer wanted to visit Panofsky who was on holiday in Kennebunkport in Maine for example, Panofsky had to inform his good friend and colleague that finding accommodation would pose a problem, as "the situation is that all the hotels here don't want a Jew." (946) (July 1st 1944) On another occasion, asking his American friends the Burrages to look for a hotel for himself and his own family, Panofsky had asked that they find somewhere that "would be in our financial compass and, in addition, would overlook our racial handicap." (900) (May 29th 1943) Karen Michels has noted, "The anti-Jewish prejudice in America in various areas of life, such as the universities, had quickly become evident to the émigrés. Conservative East Coast society above all clung to a clear distinction between Jew and non-Jew."⁹⁸ Economic conditions in America heightened the racial discrimination directed towards European Jewish émigrés. Kevin Parker writes, "...the collapse of the stock exchange, the malaise of the Depression, and Roosevelt's New Deal (dubbed by some the 'Jew Deal'), continued to fan the flames of an anti-Semitism focussed upon affluent and educated European Jews. The émigré art historians therefore had every reason to lie low upon their arrival in the United States."⁹⁹



13. Walter Friedländer,
1873-1966.

Jewish exiles in the United States, especially during the years of the Second World War, remained hyper-conscious that the threat of anti-Semitism could once more prove politically and socially dangerous. As early as 1936 a disillusioned Panofsky wrote to his old colleague Fritz Saxl, then with the Warburg Library in

⁹⁸ K. Michels, "Art History, German Jewish Identity, and the Emigration of Iconology", *Jewish Identity in Modern Art History*, C. Soussloff (ed.), 1999, pp.167-179; p.171.

⁹⁹ K. Parker, "Art History and Exile: Richard Krautheimer and Erwin Panofsky", in *Exiles and Émigrés*, 1998, pp.317-325.

London, 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." (606) (December 7th 1936)¹⁰⁰ Towards the end of the Second World War Panofsky wrote to an American friend, the author Booth Tarkington,¹⁰¹ of his and his wife's concern with developments in American politics. He compared the political situation in America explicitly with the rise of anti-Semitism in Weimar Germany:

We are both very much excited and, frankly, distracted by the turn the (Presidential Election) 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 well in Germany. (962) (November 1st 1944)

Though Tarkington attempted to assuage his friend's fears concerning the threat of any political anti-Semitism in America one gets the impression that Panofsky remained perturbed. Over and over again, he expressed to his friends in America his fear that anti-Semitism would become large-scale and organised in the way that had precipitated his enforced exile from Germany. In 1944 for example, he wrote to Margaret Barr prophesising, "Next year all our troubles will have been solved by the more and more inevitable Hitlerism in this country." (939) (May 2nd 1944) Even once the war had ended it is evident from Panofsky's letters that he believed anti-Semitism to be a real problem in America. Upon hearing from his friend and ex-colleague Fritz Saxl that there was to be named a Warburgstrasse in Hamburg, Panofsky replied with sardonic humour, "I am very much afraid that before long there will be, by way of reciprocation, a Horst Wessel Square in Washington." (1201) (March 22nd 1948)

¹⁰⁰ This letter was translated from the German by Karen Michels, in "Art History, German Jewish Identity, and the Emigration of Iconology", p.171.

¹⁰¹ Booth Tarkington and Panofsky corresponded regularly from 1938 until the author's death in 1948. The two men had great respect for one other and their letters are revealing on the one hand, for Tarkington's attempts to introduce Panofsky to something of 'American' culture, and on the other, for the obvious respect Tarkington had for Panofsky's 'European' erudition and scholarship. A record of their correspondence has been recorded and edited by Richard M. Ludwig, *Dr Panofsky and Mr Tarkington: An Exchange of Letters, 1938-1946*, 1974.

In what was in many ways an unwelcoming environment, German Jewish scholars were extremely wary of being regarded as an unwelcome imposition in American academia. It is common knowledge that most American universities had avowedly anti-Semitic admissions policies at this time. In a recent article Nathan Glazer has shown that the exclusion of Jews was a fundamental part of the admissions policy of the elite institutions of American higher education even up until the 1960s. In reference to this blatantly anti-Semitic policy Glazer writes, "It is no exaggeration to call this an obsession."¹⁰² European Jewish scholars were of course acutely aware of the danger of being assigned the status of 'other'. With the influx of exiled scholars looking for work in America after 1933 Panofsky was also wary of there appearing to be what he termed a "Jewish conspiracy". (978) (February 19th 1945)

Even though Panofsky was in a much more secure position than many of his fellow exiles, with his position guaranteed at the IAS and the status he had accrued, he was still made acutely aware of what must have seemed like dangerously xenophobic tendencies in American art circles. Indeed, as a figurehead for the German-Jewish émigrés in America, Panofsky's scholarship was often singled out for attack from those who resented the impress of 'German' or 'Teutonic' influence. Panofsky's Iconological programme was attacked in particular as an unwelcome and 'foreign' imposition in American art scholarship.

In December 1943 for example, Panofsky received in the post, from his friend and fellow émigré Walter Friedländer, a *New York Times* article with distinctly racist overtones. The author of the article, the American art critic Howard Devree, obviously regarded German scholarship as "pedantic", overly-theoretical, impractical, and elitist; and he directly implicated Iconology as a most unwelcome imposition into the American approach to art:

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

¹⁰² N. Glazer, "Late Admissions", *New Republic*, 233:26/28, December: 2005, pp.34-37. For fuller analyses of the anti-Semitism in American higher education see, J. Karabel, *The Chosen: The Hidden History of Admission and Exclusion at Harvard, Yale and Princeton*, 2005; D. O. Levine, *The American College and the Culture of Aspiration, 1915-1940*, 1986; M. G. Synott, *The Half-Opened Door: Discrimination and Admissions at Harvard, Yale and Princeton, 1900-1970*, 1979; H. Weschler, *The Qualified Student: A History of Selective College Admission in America*, 1977.

cherub in certain Renaissance paintings!¹⁰³ 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.

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 the 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 that 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.¹⁰⁴

Only the next month, Panofsky received what must have seemed an ominous and darkly threatening letter from Francis Henry Taylor, the wealthy and highly influential director of the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York. Taylor wrote to Panofsky:

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 contrary it is a deep conviction that American

¹⁰³ 'Blind Cupid' was an essay contained in *Studies in Iconology* (pp.95-128) in which Panofsky traced what would have been a well-known figure from American calendars and advertisements back through a labyrinth of classical texts and medieval depictions. In doing this Panofsky was showing off his intellectual dexterity, it was highly detailed erudite stuff; but he was also attempting, it would seem, to make it 'every-day' and popular, and to relate it to a US audience.

¹⁰⁴ Howard Devree, "Early Italian Masters" in *The New York Times*, Sunday, December 26th 1943.

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. (929) (29th January 1944)

Like Devree in the New York Times, Taylor was setting up a direct antithesis between 'German' art history and the approach to art that was supposedly better suited to an American public. Panofsky felt himself targeted specifically therefore, for importing a kind of 'foreign' scholarship that was regarded as an unwelcome and 'alien' imposition in America.

In his book, 'Babel's Tower: The Dilemma of the Modern Museum,'¹⁰⁵ published the next year, Taylor went on to publicly attack German art-historical scholarship, and Panofsky's iconology in particular, for obstructing the American Museum's true and practical purpose as a democratic repository of truly 'human' values. On the importance of the museum in America after WWII, he wrote:

More than ever before the American museum will be called upon to provide a social function...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.

In Taylor's strangely warped view, it was a lack of 'humanism' that had caused the German Jewish scholars to be exiled from Germany in the first place. He continues, "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." Taylor then went on to lambaste the oversophistication in 'Germanic' scholarship; its supposedly elitist and snobbish tendency for specialisation, and theoretical speculation which was seen as inefficient, impractical and ultimately unimportant. He complained, "More and more the specialist has withdrawn into a world of his own, writing learned and pseudo scientific dissertations addressed to a few colleagues."

¹⁰⁵ F. H. Taylor, *Babel's Tower: The Dilemma of the Modern Museum*, 1945.

Panofsky was made well aware of other American scholars who endorsed Taylor's views. Bernard C. Heyl, writing in 'The College Art Journal', a publication that Panofsky contributed to the editing of, assessed Taylor's book thus,

The reviewer agrees that...current art scholarship rates too highly a scientific approach and stresses unduly iconography, iconology and attributions. The humanistic approach to art advocated by Mr Taylor seems both timely and wholesome.¹⁰⁶

(ii) Panofsky as an American

In spite of, or perhaps partly because of, the xenophobic reaction from some quarters in America to the influx of German Jewish scholars, Panofsky actively sought to adapt to the American environment. He was determined from an early stage to make his new country his new home. He applied at the earliest opportunity for American citizenship¹⁰⁷ and was very proud when he received it on 7th June 1940. Panofsky was from an early point resolute in his wish to stay in America to become an immigrant and not to remain an exile.

He embraced American culture in his work, including many allusions to the work of Henry James, mention of the "cab drivers" that would have been such a familiar sight on the streets of New York, and even reference to a 1928 Lincoln.¹⁰⁸ Carl Landauer writes, "Panofsky adapted very well to the United States. He took so well to his new American surroundings that elements of popular American culture soon became part of his imaginative vocabulary...The man of such obvious high culture peppered his writing on esoteric subjects with witty allusions to popular culture demonstrating simultaneously his playfulness, his love for the artefacts of popular culture, and his comfort in America."¹⁰⁹ Panofsky also wrote and published an essay

¹⁰⁶ B. C. Heyl, review of *Babel's Tower* in *The College Art Journal*, 5:2, January: 1946, pp.146-148.

¹⁰⁷ In a letter to Paul Sachs of 15th February 1936, (566) Panofsky stated his intention to gain American citizenship at the earliest opportunity. The process itself required at this time a sustained residency in the country, and Panofsky noted that it could be up to four years before he achieved naturalisation.

¹⁰⁸ The reference to the 1928 Lincoln was for an analogy on p.225 of his essay "Renaissance and Renascences", *Kenyon Review*, 6, 1944, pp.201-236. The reference to 'cab drivers' occurs on p.233 of the same essay. This essay formed the basis for Panofsky's later publication in book form of *Renaissance and Renascences in Western Art*, 1960. In the later publication these references were removed.

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid*, p.274.

No. 3865404

William M. 3616



Physical description of holder(s) of date of naturalization: type 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 blemishes/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.

Even Perfectly -
(Complete and true signature of holder)

United States of America
District of New Jersey

He is known, that **ERLIN PANOFSKY**
has resided at **97 Battle Rd., Princeton, New Jersey**
having taken membership and full status of the United States of America, and as
a term of the **DISTRICT** *court of* **THE UNITED**

Trenton, New Jersey

held pursuant to law of
June 7th 1940

A black and white portrait of a man with glasses, wearing a suit and tie. He is looking slightly to the right of the camera. The image is grainy and has a high-contrast, almost stencil-like quality.

Enin Panofsky

days one on the year of our first meeting hundred and
forty and of our Independence the one hundred
and sixty-fourth.

Benjamin F. Havens

Clerk of the U. S. District Court

My dearest Alice

devoted to that most American medium, the “movies”.¹¹⁰ Although the essay ‘On Movies’ is still regarded as a seminal work of scholarship in this area,¹¹¹ it was first conceived of in more informal circumstances. Irving Lavin writes “...it was not a formal presentation to a scholarly audience, but a casual talk delivered in 1934 to a group of Princeton amateurs intent on founding a film archive (ultimately one of the greatest in the world) at the Museum of Modern Art in New York...The occasion marked the rapport Panofsky had established with the liberal-minded, public-spirited, and WASPish social and cultural ambient then in the process of creating the portentous amalgam of European sophistication and American enthusiasm that would establish New York as a new world centre of modernism.”¹¹²

Panofsky was always keen to present the impression that he was fully situated and at home in America, i.e. that he was an American. He was keen to take part in the American war effort during WWII, and to show his patriotism for his newly adopted country. In a letter to Booth Tarkington he describes his and his wife’s contribution to the war effort in Princeton:

We are both, since Pearl Harbour, 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 (it is quite an experience to hold onto a fire hose when a feeble-minded member of the English Department turns on the water full blast); and I have handed over my big dog to a Sergeant whom he helps to guard a military objective, attacking every comer on sight.

¹¹⁰ First published as “On Movies”, in *Princeton University. Department of Art and Archaeology. Bulletin*, June: 1936, pp.5-15.

¹¹¹ Siegfried Kracauer for one was influenced heavily by Panofsky’s essay when writing his *From Caligari to Hitler: A Psychological History of the German Film*, 1947. A record of correspondence between these two men, which contains discussion of their views on a theory of film, can be found in *Siegfried Kracauer – Erwin Panofsky. Briefwechsel, 1941-1966*. Published by Volker Breidecker, 1996.

¹¹² I. Lavin, editor’s “Introduction” to E. Panofsky, *Three Essays on Style*, 1995. Lavin continues, “The genial, peculiarly American context from which the essay rose is reflected in its original title, “On Movies”. This distinctly colloquial American term, which has no real counterpart in other languages, expressed the two essential points of Panofsky’s conception of the medium and its development, one social, the other aesthetic.” p.10.

Although this is a humorous letter, light in tone, Panofsky was also keen to stress seriously that he was an American patriot during the war. "I wish we could do more" he wrote later, more seriously, "and we will if and when required." (884) (October 20th 1942) At the age of 51 he even applied for overseas service in the American Army and was disappointed to be rejected.¹¹³ During the War Panofsky also acted as a sponsor for an American 'Loyalty Committee of Victims of Nazi and Fascist Oppression'. This group raised money and donated a fighter plane to the US air force as a symbol of their loyalty. (856) (April 7th 1942)

It is significant too that Panofsky never considered returning to Germany once the Second World War was over. He was asked to return to Hamburg to resume his Professorship there (which had never been filled under the Nazis) but he declined.¹¹⁴ He felt that he could not work with those who, even if against their better judgement, had been compliant during the Nazi regime. When Walter Cook enquired as to Panofsky's plans after the end of the War the German-born scholar replied,

I feel personally unable to resume human contact with those who have been connected with the Third 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 has been wrapped in cellophane, and few human beings are – can lie in a drug store for ten years without absorbing some of the smells of the drug store...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.' (October 1st 1945) (1037)

Panofsky only ever returned to Germany once, in 1967, the year before his death. He did so to accept the high national order of West Germany, *Pour le mérite*. It seems significant though that he refused to speak in German on this occasion, instead

¹¹³ In a letter to Fritz Saxl on December 14th 1943, (922) Panofsky, after relaying his and his families Christmas wishes and news, wrote, "otherwise everything is well, except that they did not accept me for overseas service thus far."

¹¹⁴ Panofsky also declined a formal invitation to return to Germany and take up a post at Leipzig University after the war. (1263) (December 14th 1948)

presenting his acceptance lecture in English.¹¹⁵ After he was forced to migrate, Panofsky certainly considered America to be his home. When urged to succeed Fritz Saxl as director of the Warburg Institute in London, after the death of his close friend in 1948, Panofsky declined. He wrote to Gertrud Bing

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 lifetime. (June 17th 1948) (1228)

He had made every effort to fit in to life in America, to be accepted, and to assimilate successfully. Although he was made very aware of the alterity of his newly adopted country, he assumed the persona of the comfortably transplanted German scholar, happy in his new environment.

(iii) *The Life and Art of Albrecht Dürer*

Panofsky did adapt his scholarly output in America. He did mould his work in an attempt to 'fit in' to, and find a place within, the American academic scene. He was though, extremely conscious of this process of adaptation. He was very aware of the give and take, the compromises involved in his scholarly acculturation.

Panofsky's Dürer book is a good example of his translation of German scholarship into an American format for an American audience. Published in 1943, and described as Panofsky's 'magnum opus',¹¹⁶ 'The Life and Art of Albrecht Dürer' represented a summation of much of this art historian's German scholarship yet published in English. It was based upon many separate specialised articles written by Panofsky in German in the first three decades of the twentieth century.¹¹⁷ When

¹¹⁵ J. Bialostocki, "Erwin Panofsky: Thinker, Historian, Human Being", *Simiolus kunsthistorisch tijdschrift*, 4, 1970, p.70. Bialostocki maintains that by speaking in English rather than German on his return to his country of birth Panofsky, "stressed his being a foreigner, he maintained distance and mistrust. Although he admitted with pride to belonging to the great tradition of German scholarship, he stressed his claim to being 'free from what may be suspected as retroactive patriotism.'"

¹¹⁶ W. Heckscher, "Erwin Panofsky: A Curriculum Vitae", p.176.

¹¹⁷ Panofsky's German language work on Dürer was extensive. It began, for example, with his doctoral dissertation in 1914, *Die theoretische Albrecht Dürers (Dürers Ästhetik)*, and included such studies as *Dürers Kunsttheorie, vornehmlich in ihrem Verhältnis zu der der Italianer*, Berlin, 1915; *Dürers Darstellung des Apollo und ihr Verhältnis zu Barbare*, 1920; "Dürers Stellung zur Antike", *Jahrbuch für Kunstgeschichte*, 1, 1921/22, pp.43-92; *Dürer's Kupferstich 'Melancholia-I'*, with Fritz Saxl, Leipzig, 1923; "Albrecht Dürers rhythmische Kunst" *Jahrbuch für Kunstwissenschaft*, 1926, pp.136-

writing the Dürer book Panofsky described it himself as, "A rather comprehensive monograph which sums up an almost lifelong occupation with this gentleman." (843) (December 27th 1941)

Panofsky had intentions of publishing a Dürer book from his earliest time in America. He had had a proposed text rejected early in his career in the United States. Significantly the Princeton University Press had informed him then that they would not consider his manuscript "unless it be remodelled so as to become a small book which has a chance to sell." (311) (May 7th 1932) Panofsky remained convinced though, that there was the need for a new English language book on Dürer.

He wrote to Fritz Saxl,

...there is no real book on Dürer in English since 1905, surprisingly enough in view of the splendid detail work accomplished by such men as Campbell Dodgson, Billy Ivins,¹¹⁸ K.T. Parker etcetera. These have only written articles and catalogues, but never a comprehensive monograph, and so mine may do for a while in spite of all its faults. In point of fact, come to think of it every bigger book appears 20 years too late. In my case, for instance, the general concept of the theme goes back, as with most people, to a time when I was 25 to 30 years of age, so it is really a book of 1920 and not of 1943, and similarly Wölfflin's Dürer of 1905 is really a book of 1890 or so. But this is inevitable because young people just do not know enough to write books of this type, so that the Dürer of 1943 will probably appear in 1965 – if books appear at all in that remote future. (892) (March 5th 1943)

Panofsky stated in another letter that he was writing the Dürer book because "The lives of the great artists have to be re-written by each generation." (823) (April 15th 1941) And in the book itself he writes, "As with most great men the image of Dürer has changed according to the periods and minds in which it has been reflected."¹¹⁹ These statements are sure indication of Panofsky's consciousness of the ongoing, relative nature of humanistic scholarship.

192; "Zwei Dürerprobleme", *Münchener Jahrbuch der Bildenden Kunst*, Neue Folge, VIII, 1931, pp.18-48.

¹¹⁸ William J. Ivins.

¹¹⁹ E. Panofsky, *The Life and Art of Albrecht Dürer*, p.10.

'The Life and Art of Albrecht Dürer' was very much German scholarship translated for an American readership. Significantly, it was dedicated upon publication to the three men who had played such important roles in Panofsky's career in the United States – Walter W. S. Cook, Abraham Flexner and Charles Rufus Morey. The book was a product of the Norman Wait Harris Foundation Lectures, held over 6 days at Northwestern University, Chicago, in 1938. These were Lectures given with the proviso that they would be published in book form, with the lecturer then granted a further honorarium. In his invitation from Theodore Koch at Northwestern University, Panofsky was informed, "the lecturer can be assured of an interested audience made up of 'town and gown.'" (711) (August 12th 1938) In effect the lectures were open to the general public and were attended by a well-to-do general audience. It was Panofsky's responsibility to attract this audience and to keep them interested and entertained. The audience would not have been a specialist one, and would not have been particularly predisposed to an overly recondite, highly theoretical or serious presentation. The audience would not have been responsive at all to the highly specialised nature of German scholarship. Panofsky was committed therefore, to making simple sense about art. Any 'specialised' knowledge had to be insinuated or naturalised, as it were, in his presentation.

In writing to accept the invitation to give the Dürer lectures at Northwestern University Panofsky gave some indication that he recognised just how 'foreign' his approach to art may have seemed to many of those in America. He replied to Koch,

On the one hand I have tried to do what I should call 'Iconography'¹²⁰ if it was not for the somewhat terrifying implications of this term, that is: to interpret the subject matter and content of works of art on the basis of contemporary sources and to connect with the general habitus of the period. On the other hand I am interested in what might be termed the 'Theory of Art', namely in those writings on perspective, human proportions, physiognomy etc which can be interpreted in the light of the works of art and vice versa. (714) (August 24th 1938)

¹²⁰ It is interesting that at this stage Panofsky still refrains from using the term 'Iconology'.

Panofsky's letter is written to Koch almost as a warning of what to expect from the Dürer lectures. He continues, "I must confess that my particular interest in Albrecht Dürer is partly due to his intense preoccupation with precisely those two things: 'Iconography' and 'Art-Theory.'"

The title of Panofsky's book gives some clue as to what may have constituted the revelatory nature of its content for many in America. In 'The Life and Art of Albrecht Dürer' Panofsky goes beyond the strict formalism of his great predecessor Wölfflin's approach.¹²¹ He provides a full examination of the artistic and intellectual underpinnings of Dürer's works in an attempt to flesh out the wider historical matrix in which they were made. It is fully an intellectual biography of an artist as opposed to a concentration on the stylistic character of the artist's works.¹²² Panofsky envisaged art history as a history of ideas, with the art historian concerned with a contextual look at meaning.

Important to Panofsky's Dürer biography are the artist's writings on art, and study of the ideas that informed his work. Dürer's relationship with Willibald Pirckheimer looms large in the book as Panofsky seeks to account for the humanist texts and theories that influenced the artist. As one commentator has put it, "Pirckheimer stands for the nascent Renaissance. Educated and worldly, he complements the talented artist...Whereas earlier scholars often merely mentioned Pirckheimer, Panofsky's fascination with Renaissance iconography and its grounding in humanistic thought prompts him to construct a wonderfully nuanced argument, running throughout most of the book, about the intellectual collaboration between the

¹²¹ H. Wölfflin, *The Art of Albrecht Dürer*, (translated from the German by Alistair and Heidi Grieve, 1971). Originally published 1905.

¹²² Jeffrey Chipps Smith makes this point well in his introduction to a recent re-publication of the Dürer book. Smith notes the different ways in which Wölfflin and Panofsky treat details extraneous to the actual works of art: For example, in regards to Dürer's wife Agnes, Smith notes, "Where Wölfflin contented himself with the passing remark that Agnes, whom Dürer married in 1494, 'was a dull person with plain features; one can well understand how nasty tongues could call her a cross for the painter to bear,' Panofsky is much more expansive. He writes, 'Agnes Frey thought that the man she had married was a painter in the late medieval sense, an honest craftsman who produced pictures as a tailor made coats and suits; but to her misfortune her husband discovered that art was both a divine gift and an intellectual achievement requiring humanistic learning, a knowledge of mathematics and the general attainments of a 'liberal culture.' Dürer simply outgrew the intellectual level and social sphere of his wife, and neither of them can be blamed for feeling uncomfortable...he lived in a world apart from hers which filled her with misgivings, resentment and jealousy...Her most intense dislike she reserved for Willibald Pirckheimer, Dürer's best friend, who in later years was to write (though not to dispatch) that famous letter in which he practically accused her of having killed her husband by her greed and pious nastiness." (p.7). J. C. Smith, "Introduction" to *The Classic Princeton Edition of 'The Life and Art of Albrecht Dürer'*, 2005.

Nuremberg patrician and Dürer.”¹²³ Studying historical records, written sources, those ‘dusty old documents’ in relation to works of art allows Panofsky to put iconography into practice. An understanding of the relationship between Pirckheimer and Dürer and the ideas that informed his art allows Panofsky to elucidate a fuller understanding of Dürer’s life and art as a whole.

This is not to say that Panofsky neglects close examination of the artworks themselves. Throughout the book the author consistently enhances our understanding of Dürer’s art through concise and enlightening discussion of the artist’s printing techniques. According to the author,

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.¹²⁴

Panofsky shows how Dürer revolutionised the graphic arts, and as these media play such an important role in the author’s story he makes a great effort to help his reader understand the technical considerations involved in making woodcuts and engravings. Panofsky discusses at various points for example, ‘The Reform of Woodcut’, (p.47); ‘Development in the Early Woodcuts’, (p.49); ‘Reform of Engraving’, (p.63); ‘The Burin and Its Use’, (p.64); ‘Fusion of Burin and Dry Point Technique’, (p.65), and ‘Development in the Early Engravings’, (p.67). These forays into the technicalities of artistic practice do much to enhance our understanding of the actual construction of Dürer’s work. Panofsky also reveals a fine eye for the aesthetic qualities of the various media in which Dürer worked and his descriptions of the individual artworks themselves add to the reader’s enjoyment and understanding of the artist’s oeuvre.¹²⁵

It is Dürer’s relationship with Italy that forms the central part of Panofsky’s narrative.¹²⁶ This is the major theme that runs throughout the book as Panofsky asserts

¹²³ Ibid, pp.xxxiii-xxxiv.

¹²⁴ E. Panofsky, *The Life and Art of Albrecht Dürer*, pp.3-4.

¹²⁵ See for example “‘Clair-Obscur’ Principles in Line Prints”, p.135.

¹²⁶ This is a point that has been noted by many scholars. See for example J. Elkins, *Our Beautiful, Dry and Distant Texts: Art History as Writing*, 1997. For an author who is critical of Panofsky’s concentration on Dürer’s relationship with Italy see Svetlana Alpers, “Is Art History?”, *Daedalus*, CVI, 1977, pp.1-13. Alpers writes for example, “If we turn to Panofsky’s masterful study of Dürer, it is characteristic that he sees Dürer as a kind of captive of the alien northern darkness struggling towards the southern light. This is of course how Dürer often saw himself and it is thus in keeping with much of

that Dürer's emergence as a 'great' 'Renaissance' artist was dependent upon his contact with Italian art. Dürer is seen to make "pilgrimages" across the Alps to learn from his Italian contemporaries. Panofsky writes,

To Dürer, the lure of Italy was twofold: he would see Pirckheimer who was then a student at Pavia, and he would breathe the air of a southern world where Classical Antiquity had been reborn.¹²⁷

According to Panofsky, Dürer's contact with Pirckheimer and a nascent humanism in Germany had,

sufficed to show him a 'new kingdom' beyond the Alps and he set out to conquer it. Dürer's first trip to Italy...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' ('Wiedererwaschung') 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.'¹²⁸

In Panofsky's view Dürer was fundamentally influenced by Italian art and art theory. It is Dürer's interest in the theory of art, the use of perspective and the study of proportions, that singles him out as the first Northern Renaissance artist. The influence of Italy is seen to have engendered,

a fundamental change in Dürer's style and Weltanschauung. He began to feel that his previous works...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 to be the only safeguard against 'errors in design'. So he began to study the essential branches of Renaissance art theory: the theory of human

his art. But it is less clear that there is a right and a wrong, a light (the south) and a darkness (the north) here." p.5

¹²⁷ E. Panofsky, *The Life and Art of Albrecht Dürer*, p.8.

¹²⁸ Ibid.

proportions; the theory of the proportions of animals; and, last but not least, perspective.¹²⁹

Elsewhere Panofsky writes,

What Dürer really wished to carry home from Italy was theoretical knowledge...He came into contact with the ideas of Alberti and Leonardo and must have gained access to some of the latter's studies in human proportions, physiognomy and, possibly, anatomy. All this made him realise that the theory of art might be understood as a scientific pursuit 'sui iuris', instead of being subsidiary to practical work and left him with a burning desire to spread this gospel in Germany.¹³⁰

The author describes Dürer going to Italy and returning to Germany reinvigorated and inspired by 'Renaissance' ideas.

Panofsky provides a detailed exegesis of Dürer's famous print 'Melencolia I' to elucidate this his main thesis.¹³¹ In many ways this section can be seen as the core of Panofsky's argument. He had written a comprehensive iconographical study of this engraving previously in German, co-authored with Fritz Saxl.¹³² In his publication of 1943 he relies heavily on this earlier work to provide a tour de force of iconography in practice. Through detailed analysis and historical research Panofsky shows how Dürer fused the hitherto disparate iconographical traditions of melancholy and 'saturnine genius' in this famous print to express the concept of the creative artistic genius who seeks to understand and harness the harmony of the cosmos at the same time as he is confronted with his own subordination to the work of God. This was the same conception of Italian Renaissance humanist anthropocentrism that Panofsky had mapped out previously in his essay 'The History of Art as a Humanistic Discipline'.¹³³ Panofsky takes the reader on a historical journey of exploration

¹²⁹ Ibid, p.80.

¹³⁰ Ibid, p.118.

¹³¹ Ibid, see pp.156-171.

¹³² E. Panofsky and F. Saxl, *Dürer's 'Melencolia I' Eine quellen- und typengeschichtliche Untersuchung*, 1923.

¹³³ In this essay, originally published in 1938, Panofsky writes, "The Renaissance conception of 'humanitas' had a two-fold aspect from the outset. The new interest in the human being was based both on a revival of the classical antithesis between 'humanitas' and 'barbaritas', or 'feritas', and on a survival of the medieval antithesis between 'humanitas' and 'divinitas'. When Marsilio Ficino defines

through long traditions of the representation of melancholy, and of geometry as a liberal art in his attempt to prove his point.

From this detailed iconographic analysis of 'Melencolia I' Panofsky then proceeds to interpret the print as an index of Dürer's own personality:

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 eternal ideas, but suffers all the more deeply from his human frailty and intellectual finiteness. It epitomises the Neo-Platonic theory of Saturnine genius as revised by Agrippa of Nettesheim. But in doing all this it is in a sense a spiritual self-portrait of Albrecht Dürer.

Later in the book, when claiming again that Dürer's use of theory, particularly his 'mastering' of perspective, defines him as a Renaissance artist, Panofsky elucidates further his 'iconographical interpretation in the wider sense'. Dürer's use of perspective marks him out as a Renaissance artist because,

...there was a curious inward correspondence between perspective and what may be called the general mental attitude of the Renaissance: the process of projecting an object on a plane in such a way that the resulting image is determined by the distance and location of a 'point of vision' symbolised, as it were, the *Weltanschauung* of a period which had inserted an historical distance – quite comparable to the perspective one – between itself and the classical past, and had assigned to the mind of man a place 'in the centre of the universe' just as perspective assigned to his eye a place in the centre of its graphic representation.¹³⁴

man as a 'rational soul participating in the intellect of God, but operating in a body', he defines him as the one being that is both autonomous and finite." *Meaning in the Visual Arts*, p.24.

¹³⁴ E. Panofsky, *The Life and Art of Albrecht Dürer*, p.261.

For Panofsky, the humanist, the Renaissance was distinguished by its stance of historical distancing from Antiquity. This was 'symbolised', in Kantian terms, by the invention and use of perspective. Dürer then, for Panofsky, brings the Renaissance to German art and this is symbolised by his supposed understanding of perspective.

In 'The Life and Art of Albrecht Dürer' Panofsky puts iconography and iconology into practice. By studying Dürer's writing and related sources the author provides a contextualised critical interpretation of Dürer's artworks. Individual artworks then inform an understanding of the artist himself. In turn, the understanding of the artist and his work is related to the prevalent *Weltanschauung*, that "general mental attitude", and this *Weltanschauung* itself again informs our understanding of Dürer as an artist. Throughout the book the reader follows the interpretive pendulum swing from artwork to artist to wider contextual history and back again. All the stages of interpretation consistently build upon one another to flesh out Panofsky's convincing portrayal of 'The Life and Art of Albrecht Dürer'.

Panofsky's theoretical definition of the Renaissance is in essence a distilled version of his 1927 essay 'Perspective as Symbolic Form'. In America though, his writing is purged of the complicated theoretical verbiage of this earlier German language essay. The Dürer book, like the lectures at Northwestern University on which it was based, was no place for in-depth theoretical explanation. An audience unfamiliar with such an approach to art would have been unprepared for complicated theoretical discourse. As an introduction to Dürerology and humanistic scholarship in general Panofsky had to ingratiate any historical-theoretical discussion in his work. Panofsky then, points tantalisingly, and for the careful reader, to theoretical and historical problems when he describes how perspective 'symbolised' the *Weltanschauung* of the Renaissance. He demonstrates the art historian's role in confronting the theoretical and speculative nature of constructs such as 'Renaissance' and 'Northern Renaissance'.

Panofsky does provide a wealth of information to bolster his theoretical interpretations. The book is awash with detailed historical research and data presentation. Panofsky is, in a sense, showing off his erudition to a nescient audience. Aware of his position as an émigré scholar though, he is at pains not to appear overly supercilious. Though he is presenting information and an approach to art that would have been unfamiliar to the American public and to many American art scholars

Panofsky did not want to appear overly condescending, highlighting the ignorance of his audience. Instead Panofsky's text is eminently approachable. He makes every effort to fashion his prose in an accessible and straightforward manner. He gently 'reminds' the reader of 'obvious' facts¹³⁵ rather than confronting them with their own ignorance. Indeed he also attempts to identify with his readership, suggesting, for example, that in order to understand the title 'Melencolia I' "we must recall to mind that theory of the four humours,"¹³⁶ a theory which Panofsky himself goes on to expound clearly and succinctly for the reader. Other iconographical explications are simply slipped in conversationally, just "by the way."¹³⁷ This familiar style of writing puts the reader at ease and encourages an easy acceptance of the information presented.

It is worth reiterating the point here that in preparing the Dürer book for publication Panofsky actually maintained some of the style and the tone of his informal lectures given at Northwestern University. Indeed, it is significant that all of Panofsky's major publications in the United States derived from this public-lecture-with-publication format.¹³⁸ All were originally conceived of as informal lectures to be given to a public audience in which no prior or specialised knowledge could be presumed. Panofsky was consciously attempting to present a body of scholarly knowledge and learning to an audience unfamiliar with a humanist-historical approach to art. The book actually maintained the structure of the series of lectures that Panofsky gave over six days in November-December 1938. A detailed synopsis shows that the first lecture corresponds to chapter one of the book, the second to chapters two and three, the third to chapter four, the fourth to chapter five, the fifth to chapters six and seven, and the sixth to chapter eight. With the second and fifth lecture condensing the content of two chapters the book follows the lecture series in mapping out a chronological exegesis of Dürer's life with a final portion dedicated to

¹³⁵ For example see Ibid p.158.

¹³⁶ Ibid, p.157.

¹³⁷ Ibid, p.161.

¹³⁸ "The History of Art as a Humanistic Discipline" was originally formulated as one of The Spencer Trask Lectures in 1937, and was later given as a subscription dinner speech for the annual meeting of the College Art Association in 1939 (See the programme for this meeting in *Parnassus*, 11:6, October: 1939, pp.34-35); *Studies in Iconology* was originally devised for the Mary Flexner Lectures given at Bryn Mawr College in October 1937; *Early Netherlandish Painting: Its Origin and Character* originated as the Charles Eliot Norton lecture series given at Harvard in 1947-48; *Gothic Architecture and Scholasticism* was originally devised for the Wimmer Lectures given at St Vincent College in 1948 and *Renaissance and Renascences*, was formulated as a lecture series given at Gripsholm Castle (which houses the Swedish National Portrait Gallery) in 1952.

NORTHWESTERN UNIVERSITY
NORMAN WAIT HARRIS FOUNDATION

Six Illustrated Lectures

by

ERWIN PANOFSKY

Professor in the School of Humanistic Studies,
Institute for Advanced Study, Princeton, New Jersey

Albrecht Dürer
Artist and Thinker

November 29, 30, December 1, 6, 7, 8
at 8:00 P.M.

Harris Hall, Evanston

THE PUBLIC IS CORDIALLY INVITED



Self-portrait of Albrecht Dürer as a young man

PROFESSOR ERWIN PANOFSKY

PROFESSOR ERWIN PANOFSKY was born in Hanover, Germany; attended the Königlich Joachimsthalsches Gymnasium, Berlin; later studied at the Universities of Berlin, Munich, Freiburg im Breisgau, taking his doctorate at the latter institution in 1914. From 1921 to 1926 he was "Privatdozent" at the University of Hamburg, and "Ordentlicher Professor" from 1926 to 1933. He was a visiting professor at New York University from 1931 to 1935, and, during 1934-35, he was also a visiting lecturer at Princeton University. Since 1935 he has been a professor in the School of Humanistic Studies, at the Institute for Advanced Study, Princeton, New Jersey.

Professor Panofsky has written extensively in German on Dürer's theory of art, especially in relation to that of the Italians; on Dürer's "Melencolia I"; on the history of the older theories of art; on German sculpture of the eleventh to the thirteenth century; on Hercules at the parting of the ways, and other ancient pictorial subjects in Renaissance and Baroque art. He has recently published in English a volume of "Studies in Iconology." He has also printed contributions in the "Festschriften" for Adolph Goldschmidt, Julius Schlosser, Max J. Friedländer and E. Cassirer, and in the A. Kingsley Porter Memorial. To the Princeton publication "The Meaning of the Humanities" he contributed a paper "The History of Art as a Humanistic Discipline." In addition to articles in the German art journals, articles by him have appeared in the *Burlington Magazine*, *The Metropolitan Museum Studies*, *Old Masters' Drawings*, *The Art Bulletin*, *Warner's Museum Annual*, and the *Gazette des Beaux-Arts*.

Professor Panofsky has followed two particular lines of endeavor: (1) to interpret the subject matter and content of works of art on the basis of contemporary sources, and to connect both with the general *habitus* of the period; (2) to study the "art theory" of the past in those writings on perspective, human proportions, and physiognomy, which, during certain periods, have accompanied the actual production and must be interpreted in the light of the works of art and vice versa. Albrecht Dürer is especially interesting in this connection because of his intense preoccupation with precisely these two things: "Iconography" and "Art Theory."

Synopsis of the Lectures

I. *Life History, Apprenticeship and Early Years of Travel.*

TUESDAY, NOVEMBER 29

Albrecht Dürer, born in Nuremberg on May 21, 1471, was the first Northern artist who realized the fundamental change brought about by the Italian Renaissance movement, and who consciously endeavored to synthesize the new achievement of the "foreigners" with the indigenous tradition. His artistic activities and even his personal life are therefore haunted by a magic, yet productive, tension between medieval craftsmanship and modern humanism, tentative expression and rational reflection, the fascination of nature's innumerable variety and a craving for general principles. Born in a back-silly and intended by his family to become a humble goldsmith as his father had been, Dürer died as a man of European fame whose reputation was not only based on what he had done with the brush and the burin but also on his achievements as a thinker and scientist, and above all, on the force of his heroic personality.

Dürer's apprenticeship with his father was more important for his further development than the modern observer might think, for his early training in metal work prepared him for his later activity as an engraver, and the teachings of the old goldsmith, who had been in the Netherlands before settling in Nuremberg, established a connection, however indirect, between young Albrecht and the great tradition of the brothers van Eyck and Rogier van der Weyden. During his subsequent stay with the local painter Michael Wolgemut (1466-90) Dürer familiarized himself with the techniques of painting and of the woodcut, as well as with the elements of Christian iconography. His outlook was enormously broadened by the customary "bachelor's journey" (1490-95) which apparently brought him into direct contact with the art of the Low Countries, deepened his interest in the work of the strangely fascinating "Flaschschmeisser" and ultimately led him to the Upper-Rhenish district (Cologne, Basel, Strassburg) where the tradition of Martin Schongauer and Nicholas Gelandt von Leiden held sway. Shortly after his (presumably unhappy) marriage in 1494, Dürer set out for his first trip to Italy, which, however short, was to be the most consequential event, not only of his personal life but also of the life of Northern art in general. It was the first dramatic encounter of a Northern genius with the world of the Renaissance.

II. *Impulsive Creation (1493-1500) and Rational Synthesis (1500-05).*

WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 30

Owing to the intrinsic tension within Dürer's artistic personality it is not sufficient to divide his activity into the customary three periods, comprising the "early," the "classic" and the "late" works. With him, this general development is overlapped by what might be called a rhythmical oscillation of shorter phases: phases of preparation, impulsive creativity and calmer, more rational synthesis, each of them lasting about one half decade. While the period discussed in the preceding lecture may be called the first phase of preparation, the following half decade (1495-1500) is marked by a hectic productivity stimulated, though by no means caused, by the master's experience in Italy. During these seven or eight painted portraits and one painted altarpiece (as well as a few paintings which have not come down to us in the original) and a great number of drawings, Dürer produced during these five years about thirty woodcuts, mostly of very large size (among them the greater part of the *Large Passion* and the fifteen gigantic representations from St. John's Revelation, the first "picture book" ever published by an artist single-handed), and about twenty engravings, a medium therefore not employed in Dürer's native Franconia. Both as an engraver and as a woodcut-designer, young Dürer surpassed his predecessor not only in regard to composition and content but also as to technique. In this respect Dürer completed what Schongauer had left undone. The nucleus of Dürer's engravings and woodcuts was instantaneous. They were almost immediately copied, in every kind of medium, all over Europe, and it is chiefly through the influence of Dürer's prints that Germany, never ceasing of creating a universally accepted style, attained the rank of an international artistic power.

The following half decade (1500-05), with a few exceptions, a period of quiet synthesis, rational systematization and sophisticated perfection, rather than of a revolutionary creativity. During these years Dürer commenced his life-long studies in the theory of art, especially perspective and the theory of human proportions, and incorporated his first results in such paintings as the *Adoration of the Magi* (Ulrich), in such engravings as the *Nativity* and *Adam and Eve*, and in such woodcuts as the *Life of the Virgin* series. These works bear witness to the fact that the overpowering pathos of the

Revolution and of the Passion of Christ was temporarily eclipsed by the fascination of theoretical problems and by the charm of the idyllic on the one hand, and of the beautiful on the other. Accordingly, the handling of the graphic media now reveals a patient refinement hardly ever paralleled in Dürer's own later works, let alone in those of his imitators. In the *Life of the Virgin* series actual human effects are wrung from the wooden medium so that an Italian engraver could not think of anything better than to translate them into engraving.

III. *The Second Journey to Italy (1505-07) and the Culmination of Painting.*

THURSDAY, DECEMBER 1

Dürer's second and much more prolonged stay in Italy interrupted his activities in the field of the graphic arts and made him concentrate on painting. It was in Venice that he executed his best known and, indeed, most "painterly" paintings, the *Beast of the Rose Garden*, and that his very drawings developed a tendency to build up plastic values by the colorful interplay of light and shade rather than by the descriptive power of lines. This newly acquired, or at least reacquainted, feeling for luminous and coloristic values was to last several years. It even made him susceptible to the influence of his greatest German contemporary who, on the whole, must be considered his opposite, namely, Martin Schongauer, commonly known as Matthias Gothard. It is not by accident that some of Dürer's most important paintings—*Adam and Eve* (Encke), the *Martyrdom of the Holy Thomas* (Venus), the *Glorification of the Trinity* (Venus), and the monumental *Pallesch*—were executed between 1507 and 1511, and that the woodcuts and engravings executed during these years (the woodcuts comprising the *Large Passion* and the *Life of the Virgin*, the earlier part of the *Small Passion* and the *Engraved Passion*) are marked by a definitely "painterly" character. While the effect of Dürer's first visit to Italy had revolutionized his native outlook, the second stay in Venice meant a corroborated rather than a revelation. It deepened his knowledge of Italian art and set theory and made him definitely conscious of the fundamentally new position of the "painterly artist" in the intellectual and social life of Renaissance civilization.

IV. *The Culmination of the Graphic Techniques (1510-15).*

TUESDAY, DECEMBER 6

The half decade from around 1510 to around 1515 might be called, with equal right, the "classical" phase, the "humanistic" phase, and the phase of culmination in the graphic techniques. It is, again, a period of maximum productivity, but Dürer no longer acted under the spell of the new youth, of a feverish religious excitement and of the first impact of a new world of artistic experience, but with sure mastery reaped the harvest of his own previous endeavors. Always interested in the theoretical foundations of artistic practice, he now began to work out his results in his theory, instead of employing them in his works. He planned and even constructed a comprehensive treatise on painting and embarked upon systematic research in the fields of descriptive geometry and of human proportions. He participated more intensely in the humanistic interests of his oldest friend, Willibald Dürer, and of other learned men, and it may be said that the style of his works produced during this period is so clear of his earlier ones as Raphael's style is so that of the later Quattrocento. Technically, the graphic media provided once more outstanding. The masterpieces of this period—the *Christian Knight*, the *St. Jerome* and the *"Melancholia I"*—are engravings in which the refinement of about 1504 has been disciplined, through admirable economy, into an unassumed equilibrium of form and idea. In addition to these and other line engravings, Dürer experimented with dry-point and, at the end of the period, with etching. He also returned to the colored ink for highly finished pen-drawings, perhaps with an eye on colored woodcuts (*Prayer Book of Maximilian I*). As far as subject matter and content are concerned, the works of this phase are characterized by an abstract and static yet highly subjective symbolism, which in the *"Melancholia I"* attains an almost Platonic profundity.

V. *The Period of Decorative Composition (1515-20), the Journey to the Netherlands (1520-21), and the Last Work.*

WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 7

The tasks entrusted to Dürer by the Emperor Maximilian I, whose *Prayer Book* has already been mentioned, were conducive to the development of a somewhat grand and emphatically decorative

manner. During the period from 1515 to around 1520 he contributed to the *Triumphal Arch* and designed the *Triumphal Procession*, portrayed the Emperor both in a painting and an enormous woodcut, and generally participated in the variegated interests of Maximilian. The sweeping lines, rhythm and carefully collected composition of these works are also found in such woodcuts as the famous *Virgin in the Rose Garden* (1518), and in several engravings. It is significant that Dürer executed only two small and rather indifferent engravings between 1514 and 1518. It is as though he had felt that the painstaking technique of burn work was not congenial to the somewhat magisterial spirit of those years. It was not before 1519 that he emphatically reverted to his favorite medium, and this reversion marked, or at least announced, the beginning of his last style. The latter can be best characterized in his own words: "When I was young," he says, "I did everything to do something new and unusual, and to capture the infinite variety of things. Now, in my older age, I realize how fully sufficient and how difficult it is to capture nature's ultimate simplicity."

However, his "ultima simplicitas" was not to be achieved before a last significant experience. On July 12, 1520, Dürer set out for a trip to the Netherlands which was to last a little over a year. From his diary we learn three important facts: first, that the contact with Italians and with a young generation of Flemish artists rejuvenated, as it were, his own youthful experience of the Renaissance phenomenon; secondly, that he was so disappointed by the false news of Luther's death that he devoted to it five or six pages of his records, pages of a truly apocalyptic power, strangely contrasting with the sobriety and accuracy of the other entries; thirdly, that he contracted a mortal disease (probably malaria) of which he was to die seven years after his return to his home town.

On the one hand it has rightly been said that he returned from Antwerp as though he had seen in Italy (witness the magnificent altarpiece, the central panel of which, a "Sainta conversation," was never executed but is known through a great number of studies and sketches, while the wings were finally transferred into the so-called *Four Apostles*, now in Munich). On the other hand, the grip of a new religious emotion, his own physical suffering and, perhaps, a consciousness of his imminent death, could not but deepen his emphatic interest in the Passion of Christ. He made preparations for a last version of this subject in great horizontal woodcuts, and, with the exception of posterity, his art was, from now on, entirely devoted to religious subjects—deserving the realm of prayer, strength and beauty which Dürer himself had popularized among the Northern artists. Dürer has left a great number of self-portraits, beginning with a silhouette drawing which he executed at the age of thirteen and reaching a climax in the

famous Munich panel of 1500, in which he styled himself into the likeness of a "Salvator mundi" or "Glorious Christ." In his last self-portrait he represented himself as the Man of Sorrows.

VI. *Dürer as a Theoretician of Art.*

THURSDAY, DECEMBER 8

The comprehensive treatise on painting planned in 1512-13 was never written. Only the treatment of three specific problems developed into printed books. In 1527 Dürer published the treatise on descriptive geometry; in 1527, his treatise on fortification; and in 1528 there appeared, shortly after his death, his famous four books on human proportions, which subsequently were translated into Latin, as well as into French, Dutch, Italian and Portuguese. Aside from the enormous volume of work which went into these three books and the peculiar charm of their clean-cut illustrations, Dürer's activity as a theoretician is important in several aspects. Dürer was the first German who tried to deal with scholarly problems in a scholarly way, while yet employing his native language. He might be considered the creator of German scientific prose. Furthermore, some of the general aesthetic ideas which had occupied Dürer's mind were incorporated into the third book of his treatise on proportions, and throw light on his general attitude towards art. His general approach was, of course, influenced by the Italian foreground, such as Alberti, Leonardo da Vinci and Piero della Francesca; that is to say, he set out to capture the general principles of artistic practice and, if possible, an absolute canon of beauty. This rationalistic tendency, however, was counteracted by his innate respect for the particular as opposed to the universal, and by his almost mystical conviction of the all-importance of the creative individual. (It is significant that Dürer signed most of his drawings, which no Italian master ever did, and also collected drawings of other artists, which he also collected as personal documents bearing witness to the "hand that made them.") Entirely conscious of this conviction, he frankly admitted that the finest things in art had to be left to individual judgment, and that all the "rules" in the world could not make up for the lack of what he calls "inspiration," while conversely, the slightest sketch of a great master was more valuable than a painting as which a mediocre man had labored for a year. Thus the theoretical thought is seen with the tension between Italian rationalism and Northern romanticism, or even mysticism, his very language being shaped by the terminology of German mystics. It was precisely from this tension that resulted certain ideas which in Italy did not emerge until a later period. Dürer was the first theorist who transferred to the artist the utterly modern idea of genius.

'Dürer as a Theorist of Art'. Panofsky himself stressed in the preface to the book, "The text from the present publication was mainly developed from the Norman Wait Harris lectures...It is therefore addressed to a 'mixed audience' rather than to scholars."¹³⁹ This helps to explain why the book is so conversational in tone. It was written with the non-specialist reader in mind. There are no footnotes in the book whatsoever. The main text appears completely self-contained. All information and knowledge contained therein is presented in continuous, even, unbroken prose. In many ways it does appear as if the author is simply providing the reader with a guaranteed and factual account of Dürer's life and work. There is no immediate reference to the tradition of scholarship outwith that which the author provides in the main text.

The Dürer book itself is testament to how quickly Panofsky learned to express himself clearly and succinctly in the English language. The author communicates with his reader in an informal, though assured manner. The reader is given the impression that they are simply being reminded of what proves to be an absolute wealth of factual information. On reading Panofsky's prose, the American author Booth Tarkington wrote to his friend,

There is a charm in (your writing) 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 shame of a misspent youth, he always feels that you overlook it and deal gently with him, courteously treating him as if he already knew much of what you tell him – which he doesn't! (776) (October 15th 1939)



18. Booth Tarkington,
1869-1946.

Tarkington's perceptive criticism identifies exactly what Panofsky was attempting to do in the United States. That is, he was attempting to translate and transcribe what was essentially an unfamiliar tradition of scholarship without making it seem like an

¹³⁹ E. Panofsky, *The Life and Art of Albrecht Dürer*, preface, p.xi. Similarly, in the preface to *Early Netherlandish Painting* Panofsky writes, "Like my previous book on Albrecht Dürer, this study has grown out of a series of public lectures – in this case the Charles Eliot Norton Lectures delivered at Harvard University in 1947-48. It steers, therefore, a similarly precarious course between the requirements of the 'general reader' and those of the special student (who may derive some benefit from the notes and the bibliography)." Preface, p.vii.

ill-befitting and foreign imposition. Panofsky was able, in his writing, to transmit that clarity, warmth and intimacy for which his lectures were famed.¹⁴⁰ He was able, metaphorically, to shed his German accent.¹⁴¹ Even though his interest in Dürer was 'iconographical' and 'theoretical', approaches that he recognised would be alien to his American audience, there is nothing in the book that smacks of awkward translation. Panofsky was presenting a congenial introduction to the practice of art history for a nescient American audience at the same time as he was providing a highly detailed account of Dürerology. His English prose is, by this time, so mellifluous that he avoids falling into the trap of condescension. His translation of his German scholarship is presented in a comfortable and comforting way. Indeed Panofsky manages to appear so 'comfortable' in his scholarship, his prose is so melodious, that one cannot help but feel appeased and assured by what he is writing. It is German scholarship made easily digestible and palatable for an English-speaking readership. There are no barbed edges or difficulties in the style or the content of the main text.¹⁴² The work is beautifully pitched at a level that almost seems to transcend the need for argument.

The Dürer book can be understood as iconography/iconology in demonstrative practice. Iconographical puzzles are posed for the reader and then solved brilliantly by the author. Panofsky was not concerned here with theorizing about 'how-to-do' art history. He was instead demonstrating 'how-to-do' art history. His American writings

¹⁴⁰ Horst Janson has made this salient point regarding Panofsky's undoubted success in writing in English, "Unlike many other (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." See H. Janson, "Erwin Panofsky", obituary, *American Philosophical Quarterly*, 1968, pp.151-160; p.157.

¹⁴¹ Interestingly, Panofsky's German accent was considered too strong for him to be requisitioned for a series of radio talks given on art. Writing of Nikolaus Pevsner's success in this media in Great Britain, Stephen Games remarks, "Not all German-speaking art historians were considered fluent enough in English to be allowed on the air: in 1954, Erwin Panofsky... was still regarded as having too thick an accent to be acceptable..." S. Games, Editor's Introduction to *Pevsner on Art and Architecture: The Radio Talks*, 2002, p.xxxvii.

¹⁴² It is interesting to note that Panofsky was, at the time he was writing the Dürer book, an avowed admirer of the rhetoric of the American president Franklin Delano Roosevelt. Roosevelt was famous for presenting what would have seemed like extremely unwelcome policy to an American public during the hard-set depression and war years. Roosevelt presented his information in a palatable and congenial manner through his regular 'friendly' and 'comfortable' fireside chats from 1933-1944. Panofsky wrote of Roosevelt, "The very style of his speeches and writings, as it hits the ear of an old philologist, seems to reveal a genuinely humanistic attitude." (1966) (November 11th 1944) Panofsky likewise, sought to communicate with an American audience in an informal, almost conversational way. There was a smoothing out of all the sharp edges in his work too, and a playing down of the need for argument. It suited his purposes well for the information he was providing not to stand out too much, for it to be easily digestible and palatable.

must be read with this in mind. Though the Dürer book appears now to be so authoritative, so convincing, the spirit in which this work was conceived demands that it be recognised as fundamentally interpretive; that is, informed by an individual interpreting subject who himself relies on a weight of tradition. By demonstrating how each of his interpretive stages enhances a fuller historical understanding of Dürer, his work, and his time, Panofsky provides an exegesis of his iconological vision in practice. The three stages of the process are not independent; they function organically for the individual. Meaning is shown to be relative and contextual. Panofsky's interpretation of 'The Life and Art of Albrecht Dürer' should not be read as an attempt to provide the definitive word on Dürer. It is not intended to be 'final'. It must be remembered that Panofsky did not consider his analysis to be akin to a 'scientific demonstration' in the way that some American critics accepted it.¹⁴³

Panofsky was extremely conscious of what he was attempting to do with his Dürer book. In deferring to an American audience the German scholar was most concerned with the reaction of his fellow émigrés. He wrote to Booth Tarkington,

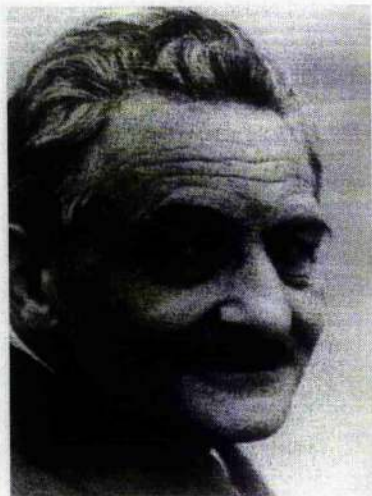
I have to be particularly thankful for the encouragement you gave me in relation to my Dürer book. In arranging it as I did I ventured the attempt to sit on two stools (with the probable result of sitting between them), namely to be more or less readable and yet not altogether amateurish. Now my critics 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. (916)
(September 23rd 1943)

Panofsky's letters to Fritz Saxl are also particularly revealing in regards to his awareness of the changes in his work compelled by the move to America. Saxl had worked closely with Panofsky in their time at the Warburg Library in Hamburg, most especially upon iconographical studies concerning Albrecht Dürer.¹⁴⁴ Saxl had then moved with the library to London in the 1930s and the two men corresponded regularly thereafter, often discussing the difficulties and challenges they faced in

¹⁴³ See S. Caumann, "The Science of Art History", *College Art Journal*, 4:1, November: 1944, pp.23-32.

¹⁴⁴ Upon hearing of Saxl's death in 1948 Panofsky described their working relationship as "almost like a marriage." Letter to Richard Krautheimer, (1209) (April 14th 1948)

presenting their scholarship to English speaking audiences in different intellectual climates. Panofsky wrote of his worries for the reception of the Dürer book to his erstwhile colleague,



19. Fritz Saxl, 1890-1948.

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 and murmur darkly about popularisation. (922) (December 14th 1943)

Similarly, he described it to Saxl on another occasion as, "...a rather 'popular' book" and, he was horrified to admit, "my first without footnotes!" (861) (May 9th 1942) Panofsky was known for his belief that as scholars "we stand on our footnotes."¹⁴⁵ He was certainly very conscious of the effect of

withdrawing them in order to make the book more 'readable' or 'sellable'. Footnotes were, for Panofsky, the material manifestation of one of his favourite adages, about how as scholars we are but dwarves 'standing on the shoulders of giants'. Footnotes provide the physical representation of the humanist scholar's respect for tradition, their consciousness of the ongoing tradition of scholarship of which their work is but a part. To withdraw them is somewhat akin to presenting your scholarship as unmediated and non-contextual – i.e. 'scientific' or 'objective' knowledge.¹⁴⁶ Panofsky continues, almost apologetically, to Saxl,

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 give rise to a still worse little book on the Gothic style¹⁴⁷ (as a whole if you please!) in the not too distant future. My old 'Iconology' owes its existence to the same custom, and it is quite good to be forced to do such things...Wind once made the remark

¹⁴⁵ See C. H. Smyth, "Thoughts on Erwin Panofsky's First Years at Princeton", p.356.

¹⁴⁶ Indeed, the American Samuel Caumann praised Panofsky's Dürer book as 'scientific', citing it as the kind of art history that could provide 'real answers' to 'real questions'. See S. Caumann, "The Science of Art History", *The College Art Journal*, 4:1, November 1944, pp.23-32.

¹⁴⁷ *Gothic Architecture and Scholasticism*, New York, 1951.

that America 'loosens ones tongue', and he's quite right – though it is perhaps somewhat demoralising. (861) (May 9th 1942)

Rather than shorter, more specialised articles, which were de rigueur in German scholarship, and in which the understanding was that the minutiae of detailed information was related to a larger theoretical problem, the Dürer book was, in part, a conscious attempt by Panofsky to comprehensively summarise previous scholarship. It was a state-of-research publication. In many ways Panofsky's presentation of the Dürer book mirrored the American approach to teaching art history where the emphasis was upon imparting a broad and encompassing sweep of knowledge, as opposed to the concentration on 'specialised problems'. It must be remembered though that the book was in essence a summation of many 'specialised' studies that Panofsky had been involved with early in his career in Germany. To William Heckscher, a former pupil in Hamburg then teaching in Canada, Panofsky wrote,

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. (917) (September 25th 1943)

Though one must take into account Panofsky's natural self-effacement, it is obvious that he was extremely concerned about the reaction to his work in America from his fellow émigrés. He was hyper-conscious of the way his work was developing in the United States. In writing the Dürer book Panofsky was quite prepared for calls of popularisation from other qualified scholars, calls of 'dumbing down'. As recompense Panofsky included a massive handlist as a second volume. This extensive addendum contained detailed reference to the long tradition of scholarship upon which the author had drawn. The main text of the first volume was designed to function on its own for the non-specialist reader. It reads as though the author is assuring his reader that all the information provided is guaranteed and self-evident,

almost a straightforward matter of fact. The handlist was conceived of as the important part for 'specialists', i.e. for German-born scholars like Panofsky. It was Panofsky's way of referring the reader to past opinion, and differing opinion, on the work of Dürer. It was the conscious, material representation of the tradition of scholarship of which Panofsky's work was but a part, and it was designed to compensate for the somewhat authoritative appearance of the main text, "in order to make the book somewhat more useful to the serious student."¹⁴⁸ Panofsky wrote of the book to Saxl, "It will be quite easy to read", again drawing attention to the fact that it was "my first without footnotes!" He continued, "...for 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."¹⁴⁹ (881) (October 17th 1942) Early the next year Panofsky once more referred to the book in correspondence with Saxl, writing,

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 more than a little, uneven in style and appearance.¹⁵⁰ (892) (March 5th 1943)

Panofsky was extremely relieved and gratified when his German associates received his Dürer book enthusiastically. Alfred Neumeyer, for example, declared that the

¹⁴⁸ E. Panofsky, *The Life and Art of Albrecht Dürer*, preface, p.xi.

¹⁴⁹ Panofsky added at the end of this letter, "Now I must do a quite terrible thing: the printed version of some lectures I gave on the Gothic Style – just like that! In a little book of about 150 pages." Again, referring to *Gothic Architecture and Scholasticism*, Panofsky expressed his misgivings about condensing large areas of scholarly research, built up through small specialist articles, into 'comprehensive' studies.

¹⁵⁰ The handlist was eventually omitted from later publications of the Dürer book, i.e. from 1954 onwards. The Princeton University Press obviously took this action to make the book more 'sellable'. Panofsky though was obviously very conscious of the change that this made to the book in terms of its form and content. In an additional preface added to publications of the book from 1954 onwards, Panofsky wrote, 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." (p.ix) The handlist was obviously considered very important by Panofsky, as the physical manifestation in print of the relativity of historical interpretation. Rather confusingly, and somewhat redundantly, references to the Handlist still litter the post-1954 'portable' edition. One wonders whether Panofsky himself refused to re-edit the text without these references as a matter of principle.

book would "surely be the most essential work on Dürer for a long time to come."¹⁵¹ Neumeyer acknowledged the importance of Panofsky's book in synthesising, and transcribing the scholarship of a large number of German art historians. He wrote,

(Panofsky) owes a debt to Heinrich Wölfflin for the method of visual analysis, and to men like Bartsch, Lippmann, Dodgson,¹⁵² Friedländer, Meder, Winkler, Flechsig, the Tietzes, for critical compilation of the vast material of drawings and prints. For iconographic interpretations he draws upon Volkmann, Giehlow, Warburg, Weber, and Saxl, and thus gives a demonstration of the cooperative spirit of research in which individual contributions are merged in the final achievement.¹⁵³

Neumeyer then went on to pay particular attention in his review to the importance of the handlist.¹⁵⁴ Panofsky was extremely gratified that a German scholar had understood the spirit in which the book was written, and he felt compelled to write a letter of thanks to his reviewer, "...it is not so much the praise which gratifies me but your real understanding for my intentions." He writes,

God knows I have no right to inveigh against 'specialists', but in the case of Dürer it seems to me that he had 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

¹⁵¹ A. Neumeyer, review of *The Life and Art of Albrecht Dürer*, in *College Art Journal*, 3:3, March: 1944, pp.117-122.

¹⁵² Though Dodgson was born and lived in England his scholarship was very much indebted to a German approach to art history. 'The Dictionary of Art Historians' states, "Peter Roth describes Dodgson as being one of the first in England to apply the rigorous techniques of German art history." (<http://dictionaryofarthistorians.org/dodgsonc.htm>)

¹⁵³ A. Neumeyer, *ibid.*

¹⁵⁴ For a similarly favourable review by a German scholar which also concentrates on the importance of the handlist see, W. Stechow, review of *The Life and Art of Albrecht Dürer*, in *The Art Bulletin*, 26:3, September: 1944, pp.197-199.

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 emphasized the better points rather than the shortcomings. (928) (January 23rd 1944)

(iv) Panofsky's Success

During his career in the United States Panofsky was able to transcend those boundaries that existed between the German and American approaches to art. Even though those who had reacted against the influx of 'German' scholarship in the arts had identified him as a figurehead of that scholarship, Panofsky did find acceptance within mainstream academic life in his adopted country. He undoubtedly made a success of the acculturation process and, fifteen years after his enforced migration, he had become well established in the United States.

In January 1947, Panofsky was invited to take the Charles Eliot Norton Chair of Poetry at Harvard University, for the academic year 1947-48. (1126) (25th January 1947) Norton had been the first lecturer of fine arts at Harvard in 1873. Following a connoisseurship mode of art history he was a major figure in the American art scene of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century.¹⁵⁵ He exerted a profound influence on the subsequent generation of American art specialists trained at Harvard, including men such as Bernard Berenson, Edward Forbes and Paul Sachs. The C.E. Norton Chair of Poetry, established in 1925 was a distinguished award, regarded as one of the most illustrious lectureships in America.¹⁵⁶ In many ways it signified Panofsky's acceptance in mainstream American art circles.

Panofsky himself recognised the magnitude of the honour, and its significance for his being accepted in the USA. In a letter to his son Wolfgang, the award was described as, "a great honour, the nearest to a Nobel prize in our field in this



20. Panofsky as Visiting Professor, Harvard, Cambridge, Mass., Winter, 1947/48.

¹⁵⁵ It is somewhat ironic that Norton had eschewed 'German' methods of investigating art as a historical phenomenon. He has been described as being "little interested in scholarship" and "wary of the professionalisation of the discipline." 'Dictionary of Art Historians', (<http://dictionaryofarthistorians.org/nortonc.htm>) For an analysis of Norton's impact in the early years of art history in the United States see also, D. Preziosi, "The Question of Art History".

¹⁵⁶ Previous incumbents of the C. E. Norton Chair had included, Gilbert Murray, Robert Frost, Igor Stravinsky and T.S. Eliot.

country...Thus far only millionaires and titled Englishmen have received this colossal plum." (1132) (February 11th 1947) Panofsky was obliged to provide between six and ten lectures over two terms, which would then be printed.¹⁵⁷ In this time he was to be a full professor at Harvard and was paid \$12,000. Returning once more to his usual self-deprecatory style, Panofsky revealed to his son, "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. Even so it is a nice thing...All the more so as the offer came quite officially amidst the bills, quite without the customary 'informal enquiries' and as I always imagined to be persona non grata at Harvard." (1132) (February 11th 1947)

In order to accept the invitation to Harvard, Panofsky had first to be excused from presenting lectures he had organised for Brown University, in Providence, Rhode Island. Writing to Ralph M. Blake, to request a reprieve from these Colver Lectures, Panofsky hoped that he would be forgiven for preferring to accept the Norton Chair at Harvard, as he believed it constituted, "the greatest distinction that can be conferred upon a scholar in my field." (1127) (January 30th 1947) Elsewhere he described it as "one of those things which one cannot refuse to accept as a member of academic life in this country." (1140) (February 28th 1947)

In the same month as he received the call to the C.E. Norton Chair at Harvard, Panofsky also received notification that he was to be honoured, in April of that year, at a special bicentennial convocation ceremony at Princeton University. (1128) (January 30th 1947) Two years later he was awarded an honorary degree from Northwestern University in Chicago, the site of his successful Dürer lectures. One gets the impression from Panofsky's letters that these awards from American universities meant a great deal to a scholar who had made such an effort to fit in to and to be accepted into American academic life. Similarly, for example, when he was elected a member of the American Philosophical Society Panofsky was immensely proud that it signified in effect his successful acculturation. He wrote on hearing of his nomination to this, "the oldest learned society in this country",

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

¹⁵⁷ These were the lectures that were eventually published in 1953 as *Early Netherlandish Painting: Its Origin and Character*.

of eighteenth century humanism (and humanity), but is also one of the most typically and admirably American institutions. (896) (April 24th 1943)

(v) Continuing Difficulties for Émigré Scholars

Despite his acceptance in American academia by the late 1940s Panofsky was still being made aware of the difficulties other refugee scholars faced in their attempts to make the transition from Germany to America successfully. Indeed, the fact that Panofsky had achieved such an elevated status meant that other émigré scholars looking to advance their careers in the United States often consulted him in an advisory capacity.

One young refugee art historian, Richard Hertz, whom Panofsky had known in Hamburg, wrote a plaintive letter asking for advice and recounting how he had felt the harsh consequences of a xenophobic American intellectual environment. He informed Panofsky,

My incompatibility with the American academic outfit is not factual but circumstantial, as it were. The fact is that I was a very successful teacher, whom the university of Dubuque (Iowa) used to good advantage in all kinds of fields, thus economising on teachers whom they would have had to hire otherwise (for instance I taught economics to big classes of navy cadets during the war).

Hertz went on to describe a successful publishing record and also his initial success in gaining a temporary Guggenheim Fellowship. But he then lamented to Panofsky the fact that he had reached an impasse in his efforts to find further permanent employment in America. He writes,

Things became difficult only when I had received the Guggenheim Fellowship...I had hoped that at least the prestige of the Guggenheim Foundation would facilitate my task of finding new employment; but the contrary happened; whatever I tried I was told: 'Yes, but the Germans are always trying to be fundamental. We are 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 very well know, and my classes in Dubuque were distinguished by a light touch which made them very popular – but how can I convince the people here?...So I am trapped in a maze of misconceptions, misunderstandings, and prejudices, and it would be all right if I didn't have a family. By what turn of fortune's wheel I shall ever get out of my present plight I do not know. (1265) (December 16th 1948)



RICHARD O. HERTZ

Associate Professor of Art, Dubuque University; Director
of Dubuque Art Association; formerly Art Lecturer,
Carleton College, Northfield, Minnesota

Before Dr. Hertz came to America four years ago he had seen most of Europe including South Russia; the Far East and the Near East, North Africa, Indonesia and South India.

Having studied History, Art and Social Science, he had been working in the German Diplomatic Service with the special purpose to foster international understanding on cultural lines.

With the Nazi ascendancy he left Germany to continue the work he had begun. In the Middle West of America his lecturing and teaching tries to make people conscious of the fact that behind the confusion of the present situation there are factors which belong and will always belong to the whole of mankind.

One of these factors is Art which like Religion and Philosophy directs the imagination towards a vision in which our fears and obsession dissolve. Art is a main avenue towards a free life and should be conceived not as mere play but as an experience and inspiration that lifts existence to plane of true greatness.

Dr. Hertz is fortunate to have at his disposition a collection of very fine color slides done by the Columbia Museum at Dubuque. He proposes lectures on the following subjects.

1. *Art and Infinity*
2. *Art and the Aristocratic Ideal*
3. *Art and the Democratic Ideal*
4. *Art and Revolution*
5. *Art and the Religious Vision*
6. *Cezanne and the myth of our time*

21. Leaflet for 'Richard Hertz: Art Lecturer', c. 1944/45.

Hertz's experience goes to show how hard a time some émigré scholars had getting anything beyond temporary work in the US, even years after the end of the Second World War. Panofsky's reply to his young associate shows that the older scholar was well aware that his own 'comfort' in America was not to be taken for granted. He writes,

Many thanks for your letter...I am, as you can imagine, very distressed to hear that you have been out of luck for so long, and at the same time, full of

admiration for your courage. I saw Dr Aydelotte at once.¹⁵⁸ He felt about the matter precisely as I do and told me that he had written to several quarters on your behalf but as yet, to his great disappointment, has had no favourable response. Neither does he see a tangible result in the near future; and I am sorry to say, that I, with my very limited influence in academic and other circles, 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. (1263) (December 14th 1948)

Even in 1949 it was exceedingly rare for an émigré scholar to receive a prestigious permanent appointment in America. Hanns Swarzenski was the exception that proved the rule when he was awarded a place at a prestigious gallery in Boston, with additional teaching duties at Harvard. Panofsky wrote to congratulate Swarzenski, telling him,

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...congratulations are in order. (1307) (April 4th 1949)



22. Hanns Swarzenski,
1903-1985.

Swarzenski's achievement must have been thrown into sharp relief for Panofsky just a couple of weeks later, when he was only able to secure a year's scholarship for the German-Jewish philologist Erich Auerbach at his own Institute for Advanced Study. Panofsky wrote to Richard Krautheimer, a fellow émigré art historian working at Vassar College, New York, and on whose behalf he was helping Auerbach,

¹⁵⁸ Dr Frank Aydelotte, director of the Institute for Advanced Study.

In strictest confidence I should like to tell you that by an unexpected windfall it will probably be possible to give a one-year's appointment to our mutual friend, Auerbach. Please don't mention this to anyone as yet. I only wanted to inform you because I know your interest in him. And, more importantly, I wanted to tell you that, if this appointment should materialize, it will be strictly limited to one year. So please try to prevent 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. (1309) (April 18th 1949)

Krautheimer, in turn, thanked his friend for his efforts, replying,

I fully understand that this is not a permanent position and that he (Auerbach) 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. (1309) (April 21st 1949)



23. Richard Krautheimer,
1897-1994.

As late as 1949 then, Panofsky was still extremely sensitive to the position of German émigré scholars in American academia. There was a continued prejudice against German scholars in American art circles. Even although Panofsky was able to transcend those differences that existed, and although he himself had been generally accepted by the mid 1940s, he was always conscious of the process of acculturation, the give and take involved for a German scholar trying to make a career in America. His sensitivity to the process is demonstrated further by an incident late in 1949. Panofsky was asked by Julius Held to lead a Festschrift for their fellow German-American immigrant Hans Tietze. Panofsky although a close personal friend and a great admirer of Tietze's scholarship, declined. He stated to Held that he would be

more than willing to contribute to Tietze's *Festschrift*, but recommended that the American Fiske Kimball¹⁵⁹ be asked to lead it.

I should be most ready to participate but, again, not at the head of the group, however honourable such a role may be. I should like to suggest that you approach Fiske Kimball who, as I happen to know, is a very close friend and a great admirer of Hans Tietze. Being much more of a public character than I am, I think that he would be quite willing to undertake such a task...and I also feel that it would be quite wise to have an American rather than an immigrant scholar at the head of the group. (1328) (September 27th 1949)

Panofsky was obviously still extremely sensitive to his and his fellow refugee scholars' status as 'foreigners' in America. He was uncomfortable with any undue attention being drawn to the presence of German scholars in American academia. For the same reasons as in the case of Hans Tietze, Panofsky had also previously refused to lead a *Festschrift* for Walter Friedländer's 70th birthday, even though he described Friedländer as "certainly a great scholar, and in addition, the best friend I have in the world." Although obviously gratified by his own success and the status he had achieved, Panofsky was, in many ways, reticent about attracting attention to himself as a refugee scholar. He very much preferred to adopt the persona of the fully acculturated and naturalised European-American, comfortable and at home in the United States.

V. Resilience and Response

(i) Iconography and Iconology

Although Panofsky was very determined in his efforts to appear as a fully naturalised American citizen, as his time in America passed, he became increasingly concerned with the way that his Iconological method was being adopted. It was taken

¹⁵⁹Fiske Kimball was the Director of the Philadelphia Museum of Art and Chair of the Department of Art at the University of Virginia.

by many in the American environment to be a fully 'scientific' and empirical way to 'do' art history; the straightforward, practicable methodology upon which the discipline could be based. As Colin Eisler has noted, "America seized iconography as scientific and disciplined, preferable to the sentimental Ruskinian morality of a Charles Eliot Norton, more accessible than the daunting genius of a Henry Adams, less convoluted than the untranslatable theories of the Vienna school."¹⁶⁰ But he also states that Iconography in practice, often "dwindled into method. There was the feeling that if one only knew enough texts, the hardest pictorial codes could be cracked."¹⁶¹

The practicability of what Panofsky had termed 'iconography in the narrower sense' in 1939, i.e. the tracing of themes, motifs etc in artworks through the study of those 'dusty old documents', made art history akin to detective work. This led to the false impression for many in the U.S. that the 'meaning' of a work of art was simply there to be discovered, as an objective reality of the artwork itself. Emphasis upon 'iconography in the narrower sense' had led many to believe that art history could be a self-legitimising discipline, an empirically justifiable pursuit, guaranteed by the 'objectivity' of its methodology.

Panofsky himself was concerned that there was not enough concern with what he had, in his 1939 publication, called 'iconography in the deeper sense'. This fundamentally interpretive level had, in some senses, fallen by the wayside in America, because it demanded that art history be recognised as a speculative pursuit, a theoretical discipline; and this did not segue smoothly with the American idea of what constituted 'scientific' disciplinary practice. Panofsky wanted to stress to his American audience that 'iconography in the deeper sense' was fundamental to the critical vitality of art history as a humanistic discipline.

In a lecture of 1946, entitled 'What is Iconology?', Panofsky re-emphasised the difference, and the importance of the difference, between 'iconography in the narrower sense' and 'iconography in the deeper sense'. In order to make the difference more explicit however, he made clear the distinction this time between 'iconography' and 'iconology'. Where 'iconography' was purely descriptive and classificatory, 'scientific' as it were, 'iconology' was, at a fundamental level,

¹⁶⁰ C. Eisler, "Panofsky and his Peers in a Warburgian Psyche Glass", *Source Notes in the History of Art*, 4:2/3, 1985, pp.85-88; p.86.

¹⁶¹ *Ibid*, p.87.

comparative and interpretive. Its success was based upon the recognition of the interpreting subject's subjectivity.

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 to the individual situation in which a given motif is used, or changed, by individual artists and in connection with individual tasks; third, with an eye on the general intellectual context (religious, philosophical, political etc.,) within which the various motifs came into being and were developed.¹⁶² (October 26th 1946)

Panofsky was then at pains to stress and reiterate the significance and importance of the iconological level. This was where art history turned interpretive. It was an understanding of the hermeneutic relationship between the interpretive 'iconology' and the empirical-scientific stage of 'iconography' that gave Panofsky's humanistic art-historical methodology its critical vitality. There was an umbilical relationship between the statistical and descriptive iconographical stage and the iconological interpretation. The one qualified the other and vice versa. An understanding of the interaction between the two constituted a 'historical' understanding. This was the spirit in which humanist art-historical inquiry had to be carried out.

Panofsky was gratified to find that the Dutch scholar Henri van de Waal held similar views as to the importance of the relationship between iconography and iconology.¹⁶³ A letter from Panofsky to van de Waal, in which he thanks the Dutchman for a copy of a speech he gave at Leiden University, gives some insight into how Panofsky envisaged the success of his own attempts to introduce an American audience to a truly 'historical' approach to art:

¹⁶² This talk was given at the Frick Collection in New York on 26th October 1946. The passage quoted comes from the summation of the lecture given in a handout. In the lecture itself Panofsky went on, after outlining the methodology, to look at specific iconological problems concerning the work of Titian, Dürer and Van Eyck.

¹⁶³ Henri van de Waal (1910-1972) was a Jewish scholar who had been dismissed from his post at Leiden University following the Nazi occupation of the Netherlands. He resumed his post after the war and became known for developing 'Iconclass', a systematic overview of themes, subjects and motifs in Western art. For an analysis of his work see R. van Straten, *Iconography-Indexing- Iconclass. A Handbook*, 1994.

I have seldom felt such a vivid impression of what the old slogan 'hands across the sea' may mean...I myself gave, just two weeks ago, a public lecture on the subject 'What is Iconology?' which, as you can imagine, agreed almost ad verbum with what you so impressively state. I had even used very similar comparisons ('ethnology' and 'ethnography', etc.) to make the relationship (between iconography and iconology) clear; only I was cautious enough to admit that some 'iconology' is to 'iconography' not as 'ethnology' is to 'ethnography' but rather as 'astrology' is to 'astrography.' But in this respect, too, we are in agreement: every method, as you so rightly say, depends for its success upon the spirit in which it is applied, and, to quote your own words, no key fits all locks. But there are really some locks, which no other key will fit. In short, 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. (1113) (November 20th 1946)

When Panofsky makes mention of "the spirit in which (the iconological method) is applied", he is referring to the consciousness that the interpretive level is itself, by its very nature, susceptible to interpretation. Humanistic inquiry is necessarily an ongoing, continuous, process in which each interpretation is relative to the *Weltanschauung* that creates it. One gets the impression that Panofsky is grateful to find a kindred spirit in Henri van de Waal. He finds the consonance of the Dutchman's views with his own gratifying in light of the way in which his iconological method had been criticised by some in America and the way in which it had been adopted by others. Referring to the attacks on his work by Francis Henry Taylor, Panofsky continued,

You can hardly know that you lent me aid and comfort in a really critical moment. After many American students had become quite interested in what you and I call 'Iconology'...a very influential man in this country, for reasons best known to himself, has tried to discredit this kind of study as something bloodless, lifeless, and what not, and has even made it responsible for Nazism on the grounds that students confronted with this kind of thing simply had to

turn to Hitler for relief. All this must sound comical rather than serious to you, but it may be quite dangerous here. (1113) (November 20th 1946)

For his part, van de Waal replied, that he too was



24. Henri Van de Waal,
1910-1972.

...aware of the struggle for iconology for a place under the sun and the lack of understanding that exists among many colleagues...In Holland at the moment there is not much understanding for this kind of study either. A colleague said to me, hearing of my plans to study Rembrandt's biblical representations from (the iconological) point of view: 'Why do you take all that trouble? Hofstede de Groot already knew all that the Rembrandt drawings represented.' (1191) (31st December 1947)

Van de Waal too was obviously aware of the difficulties of propagating a humanistic iconological approach to art that depended for its epistemological justification upon a continuous, critical, self-reflexive spirit.

(ii) Panofsky and Humanistic Study in America

Panofsky became increasingly anxious with the approach to the humanities in general in his time in the United States. He wanted there to be a clearer distinction between, on the one hand, historical/humanistic inquiry, and on the other, the coldly factual, statistical and 'objective' approach to 'science' prevalent in the USA. As Christine Hasenmueller has noted,

(Panofsky) envisaged the tragic result that would follow attempts to subordinate a humanistic concern for meaning to implicit and often naive 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 those unspoken values could not make art history a science, but it could well sap its vitality as a humanistic discipline...(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 (the American) intellectual climate.¹⁶⁴

By November 1945 Panofsky was critical of the tendency for "too much emphasis on 'social science', as opposed to real science on the one hand and history on the other." In this letter to Harold Taylor, the President of Sarah Lawrence College in Bronxville, New York, Panofsky shows that he was becoming increasingly conscious and increasingly wary of the difference between the German and the American approaches to 'science'. "In my opinion" he writes,

the very name 'social science' is somewhat misleading: if the analysis of 'social,' i.e. human, situations is really 'scientific' it ceases to be 'social;' if it is really 'social,' i.e. centred upon the human rather than the statistical elements, it ceases to be a science and becomes a branch of history. (1055)
(November 22nd 1945)

Panofsky wanted clearer distinction made between that which was deemed 'scientific' in the U.S. and that which was the province of historical or humanist inquiry.

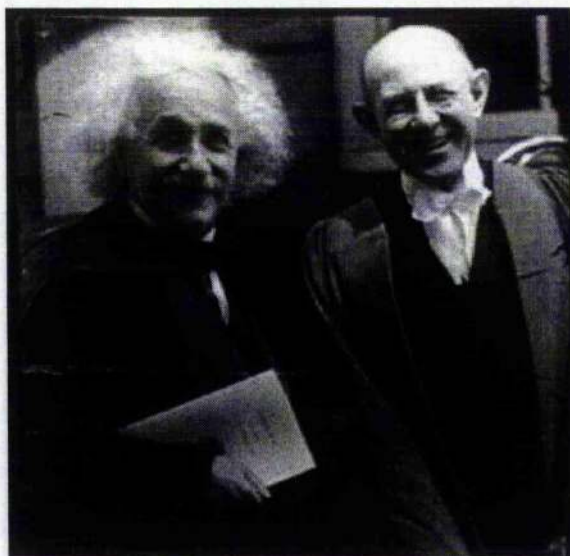
With the use of the atom bomb to end the Second World War and the technological thrust of the Cold War that ensued almost instantaneously, 'science' assumed an unrivalled pre-eminence in the United States. In an increasingly technological land, the advances of 'science' meant that the importance of the humanities was diminished. Panofsky's two sons became scientists in the United States, and the irony of the fact that he initially presumed they were cut for a career in academia, as philologists, would not have been lost on him. He recalls with some humour how, at a meeting of the Philosophical Society and the National Academy of Science, convened to discuss the significance of the use of the a-bomb, Robert Oppenheimer "greeted me very kindly in my capacity of 'father of two useful

¹⁶⁴ C. Hasenmueller, "Panofsky, Iconography, Semiotics", *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*, 36:3, Spring: 1978, pp.289-301; pp.296-297.

sons’.”¹⁶⁵ **(1054) (November 22nd 1945)** This incident must have been of some significance to Panofsky, who would have been more used to being treated with some deference in Germany due to his status as a humanist.

Even at the Institute for Advanced Study Panofsky felt that the supposed prestige of more ‘practical’ subjects, an emphasis on science, mathematics etc., was seeing the humanities relegated in status and importance. Writing to Fritz Saxl in 1946 of the difficulties he was experiencing securing work for Hanns Swarzenski Panofsky complained,

The situation at the Institute becomes fishier and fishier. The Trustees – and, I am afraid, also Aydelotte (By then Director of the IAS), not to mention his prospective successor [None other than Robert Oppenheimer]¹⁶⁶ – seem quite decided to let the humanities go to hell in favour of mathematics, for which they have respect on



25. Albert Einstein and Frank Aydelotte, c.1940s.

account of its incomprehensibility, and economics which they naively presume to be useful. Vacancies are not filled, the age limit rules are vigorously applied 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. So I am really worried as to whether I’ll be able to continue Hanns much longer... **(1074) (March 8th 1946)**

A few months earlier Panofsky had been asked to speak at Princeton in honour of his friend and colleague, the Nobel Prize winning scientist Wolfgang Pauli. He took

¹⁶⁵ Oppenheimer was famous for his research and work on the American development of the atomic bomb (the Manhattan Project). Panofsky’s son Wolfgang was also closely linked with this research. He was part of a surveillance team in an airplane that witnessed the first plutonium bomb test in the desert of New Mexico on July 16th 1945.

¹⁶⁶ Frank Aydelotte succeeded Abraham Flexner as Director of the Institute in 1939; Oppenheimer, after his success working for the American government, took over in 1947.

that opportunity to point to the differences that then existed between the humanist and the scientist,

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 he would not want to read it.

He then sought to elucidate for his audience those areas where the two could and should be united, in their pursuit of an 'all' of knowledge,

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.¹⁶⁷ 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'.

Panofsky is here attempting to describe the German ideal of an 'all' of knowledge, where all inquiry is *wissenschaftlich*. At the same time he propagates the idea that the self-conscious humanist must be aware of the relativity of historical inquiry, and their own subjective input into the history they create. He is stating that there can be no really 'objective' history.¹⁶⁸ It is the self-conscious realisation of this fact that makes all humanist inquiry truly historical.

¹⁶⁷ In "The History of Art as a Humanistic Discipline" Panofsky had written that, "...while 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." p.28.

¹⁶⁸ Just as there can be no really 'objective' science in this sense.

(iii) Panofsky's Criticisms

Panofsky believed that a truly 'humanistic' environment was lacking in American academia. He believed that the American student's educatory experience at high school did not compare favourably to the German student's experience at Gymnasium. Whereas the German students' humanism was bred in the bone from an early age, through the basic philological training received at the Gymnasium school, the American student lacked such a formative humanistic training, and this could not be rectified at university level. As Panofsky became more comfortable in his acceptance in America, he began to express such concerns publicly, while at the same time with some subtlety. It is worth quoting Panofsky's letter to the educator Harold Taylor¹⁶⁹ (previously referred to) at some length as it gives a good indication of what the German scholar felt were the basic problems with the American education system. Panofsky writes,



26. Erwin Panofsky at the IAS, Princeton, New Jersey, 1950s

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, being nevertheless a schoolmaster at heart, I have given some thought to my own experience as a teacher on both sides of the Atlantic. On the basis of this experience I believe, just like you, that the 'elective system' in our colleges should be improved rather than discarded in favour of a compulsory curriculum...Yet it seems that the clamour for a required curriculum, like most clamours in history, is not without foundation, and I feel that this

clamour arises, not so much from the dismay of students as from the dismay of the professors. When confronted by a group of students...we are perplexed by

¹⁶⁹ Panofsky was replying to Taylor on account of receiving a copy of the American's inauguration address by mail. Taylor had spoken on "The Uses of Education", and Panofsky, largely in agreement with Taylor's views, felt it an opportune moment to raise his own additional concerns with a kindred spirit.

the uncertainty of 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, long-winded explanation? Can we be sure that 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 St Bernard?

There is, I believe, a genuine need for some assurance as to a lowest common denominator. But the fallacy, I think, is the belief that this need can and should be met in college. It should have been met, even before the college teacher begins with his job; in other words, the main trouble 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.

Panofsky then went on to describe the problem of what he saw as the "wrong type of teaching personnel in Secondary Schools." He stressed the need for active scholars who combined their teaching with actual research:

Nearly all of these teachers (at secondary school level) 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 of, say, French has now to devote nearly as much of their time to the alleged technique of teaching their 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.

Panofsky was clearly exhibiting nostalgia for the German tradition of humanist learning, with its *Bildung* ideals, and where teaching and research were considered inseparable activities. He then compared the situation in American schools explicitly with his own experience at the German Gymnasium school,

In this country there is, from the outset, an insurmountable gap between college and university teachers on the one hand, and Secondary School teachers, on the other. There should be, as formerly in Europe, an interchange between these two 'levels'. 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. (1055) (November 22nd 1945)

In America Panofsky hankered after the old *Bildung* ideals that were inherent from an early stage in the German educatory system. The problem of early years education was a topic that he returned to in his letters again and again. Responding to the author of an article on the structure of Princeton's schooling, for example, he writes,

The 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 which is, in turn, tied up with the problem of teacher's salaries and the still more vicious emphasis on 'education' rather than knowledge of subjects. 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 a college.¹⁷⁰ (1300)
(March 24th 1949)

It is interesting, and worth noting that when making his criticisms of the American system, Panofsky is at pains to stress that he is part of that system. He writes of "our Secondary Schools", and "our young men and women" when referring to those in America. He is consciously emphasising that he sees himself as American, stressing his status as the happily naturalised European émigré. In this light, he is able to make his criticisms appear less severe to his American colleagues. But there is no mistaking that he was conscious of the fact that America lacked the truly humanistic environment in which he himself had been schooled.

In 1953 Panofsky did eventually contribute to a publication dealing with émigré scholars' impressions of the American intellectual environment. 'The Cultural Migration: The European Scholar in America' was developed in book form from the Benjamin Franklin Lectures given in Philadelphia in the spring of 1952.¹⁷¹ Panofsky's contribution 'Art History' complemented 'The Social Sciences' by Franz L. Neumann, 'The Study of Literature' by Henri Peyre, 'The Scientists and their New Environment' by Wolfgang Köhler, and 'The Conquest of Theological Provincialism' by Paul Tillich. Panofsky, as well as the other scholars such as Tillich, obviously felt comfortable enough by this point in their positions in American academia. Envisaged along similar lines to the publication first mooted by Edward Murrow in 1935, the émigré scholars were expected to express criticisms of the methods used and the results achieved by American scholars in their particular field, gains to American scholarship resultant from the intellectual migration of the thirties, and "his happy surprises in the American academic milieu." Panofsky obviously felt more at ease with such a charge some 20 years after the initial migration, and he did give voice to his criticisms of the American intellectual environment. But it is important to recognise that he did couch these criticisms in such a way as to make them appear as inoffensive as possible. As mentioned previously, many commentators have subsequently interpreted Panofsky's essay as a 'rose-tinted' homage to the American

¹⁷⁰ Even as early as 1938 Panofsky had actually made an unsuccessful proposal to set up model schools at Princeton that conformed to the standards of the German Gymnasium. See E. Panofsky, *Bulletin of the Institute for Advanced Study*, no.7, 1938, p.344.

¹⁷¹ W. Rex Crawford (ed). *The Cultural Migration: The European Scholar in America*, Philadelphia, 1953.

environment in which he took up permanent residence in 1933.¹⁷² This historical essay must itself be understood historically however. Panofsky did not want to appear ungrateful to his new countrymen, nor unwilling to acknowledge the indigenous American tradition of art scholarship and the contributions of American scholars.

After beginning with some biographical details concerning his own particular circumstances, Panofsky then briefly stresses that the history of art, as an acknowledged and independent discipline, was first established in German-speaking countries. He references Wincklemann's 'Geschichte der Kunst des Altertums', of 1764, as "the first book to flaunt the phrase 'history of art' on its title page"; he dates the first full professorship in the history of art to 1813, to Dominic Fiorillo at Göttingen University, and he states that Karl Friedrich von Rumohr laid the methodological foundations of the discipline in 1827 with his 'Italienische Forschungen'.¹⁷³ He then names the leading proponents of the new discipline in men such as Riegl, Dvořák, Wölfflin, Warburg, Goldschmidt and Vöge. Panofsky continues however,

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...But the fact remains that at the time of the Great Exodus in the 1930s the German-speaking countries still held the leading position in the history of art – except for the United States of America.¹⁷⁴

What then follows is a characteristically gracious appraisal of the tradition of art scholarship indigenous to North America. Panofsky is at pains to stress that there was already, prior to the 1930s, an art-historical environment in the United States. This

¹⁷² Both J. Hart and K. Brush refer to Panofsky's biographical recollection as 'rose-tinted'. See J. Hart "Erwin Panofsky and Karl Mannheim: a Dialogue on Interpretation", and K. Brush, *The Shaping of Art History: Wilhelm Vöge, Adolph Goldschmidt, and the Study of Medieval Art*, 1996. David Summers, somewhat erroneously I feel, has gone even further in this respect, declaring that in this essay, "Panofsky had harsh words for the intellectual tradition that he had left behind (and) praise for the anti-theoretical – or non-theoretical – traditions of American scholarship." D. Summers, "Meaning in the Visual Arts as a Humanistic Discipline", in I. Lavin (ed.), *Meaning in the Visual arts: Views from the Outside: A Centennial Commemoration of Erwin Panofsky*, 1995, p.9.

¹⁷³ E. Panofsky, "The History of Art", in *The Cultural Migration: The European Scholar in America*, p.84.

¹⁷⁴ Ibid, pp.84-85.

distinctive tradition, he maintains, developed out of the 'gentlemanly' scholarship of men such as Henry Adams and Charles Eliot Norton, and fought for its independence "out of an entanglement with practical art instruction, art appreciation, and that amorphous monster 'general education.'" ¹⁷⁵ Its founding fathers were, according to Panofsky, figures such as Charles Rufus Morey, Arthur Kingsley Porter, and Paul J. Sachs; men he actually knew personally. Panofsky described the period from 1923-1933, as a "Golden Age", in which the work of American scholars (mostly on the Eastern seaboard) such as Morey, Porter, Richard Offner, Walter Cook and Fiske Kimball had meant that art history in America "began to challenge the supremacy, not only of the German-speaking countries, but of Europe as a whole." ¹⁷⁶

In Panofsky's estimation, these American scholars had benefited precisely because of their isolation from Europe. He claimed that this allowed for a certain objectivity in their scholarship: "Where the European art historians were conditioned to think in terms of national and regional boundaries, no such limitations existed for the Americans." ¹⁷⁷ Similarly, this "cultural and geographical distance" could compensate for the lack of that "historical distance" ("we normally require from sixty to eighty years" he writes) needed to deal, in a humanistic sense, with contemporary art. ¹⁷⁸

Panofsky's eulogy to the American environment sets the scene for his account of the benefits the German émigrés encountered in 1933. He points to the fact that they found vast collections of European painting and manuscripts in American museums and private holdings, and that many new and exciting archaeological digs in Europe, funded by American money, had encouraged fresh approaches and new advances in scholarly research in the U.S.A. As Panofsky writes,

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, brought

¹⁷⁵ Ibid, p.86.

¹⁷⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷⁷ Ibid, p.90.

¹⁷⁸ Ibid, p.91. Panofsky obviously had in mind Alfred Barr at this point, and the work Barr had done as Director of the Museum of Modern Art in New York.

perhaps the most essential gains which the immigrant scholar could reap from his transmigration.¹⁷⁹

According to the émigré scholar,

in addition it was a blessing for him to come into contact – and occasionally into conflict – with an Anglo-Saxon positivism which is, in principle, distrustful of abstract speculation...and last but not least, to be forced to express himself, for better or worse, in English.¹⁸⁰

Panofsky continues half-jokingly,¹⁸¹

it was inevitable that the 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 – even before the Nazis made German literature unintelligible to uncontaminated Germans – 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...The German language unfortunately permits a fairly trivial thought to declaim from behind a woollen curtain of apparent profundity and, conversely, a multitude of meanings to lurk behind one term...In short, when 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...Forced to express ourselves both understandably and precisely, and realizing, not without surprise, that it could be done, we suddenly found the courage to write books on whole masters or whole periods instead of – or besides - writing a dozen specialised articles.¹⁸²

¹⁷⁹ Ibid.

¹⁸⁰ Ibid, pp.91-92.

¹⁸¹ Ernst Gombrich points out the humour intended in these remarks in his obituary for Panofsky. See *Burlington Magazine*, 110, June: 1968, pp.357-360; p359.

¹⁸² Panofsky, "The History of Art", p.92.

Panofsky, then, spends the first part of his autobiographical memoir being typically generous to his adopted country. He is keen to stress the positive aspects of his move from Germany to America. He is also at pains to point out, perhaps somewhat disingenuously, "No foreign scholar has, to the best of my knowledge, ever displaced an American born."¹⁸³ He rather emphasises how the discipline grew in America to encompass those who wished to pursue a career in art history. Panofsky seems keen to emphasize in this first part of his essay, the apparent propitiousness of the cultural migration of art historians from Germany to America. It is certainly this first part, in which Panofsky refers to those "spiritual blessings which this country has bestowed upon the migrant art historians", that subsequent commentators must have in mind when they refer to Panofsky's 'rose tinted' homage to the American intellectual environment. It must be borne in mind however that Panofsky was keen to present himself as a fully naturalised American citizen by this point. What is often overlooked is the thinly veiled and perceptive critique of the American academic environment, in comparison to that in Germany, which then follows. In this second part of his essay Panofsky writes clearly and nostalgically about the *Bildung* ideals that pervaded the German university system. It is worth quoting him at some length in order to reassess his views historically, and to do better justice to Panofsky's views of academic life in America. In this light it seems more probable that Panofsky's earlier eulogy to the American environment was his way of ingratiating himself somewhat with an American readership about to be confronted by the criticisms of a 'transplanted European'.

Panofsky goes on, in the second half of his essay, to describe basic differences between academic life in the United States and Germany. Based on his own personal experiences, the second part of this essay clearly expresses a hankering after those *Bildung* ideals that informed the German education system at the turn of the twentieth century. In doing this Panofsky recognises that the scope of his essay goes beyond just art history. He is concerned at this point with the development of the humanities in general in the United States. He writes of his discussion of "organisational questions" that it will "transcend my subject because what applies to the history of art applies *mutatis mutandis*, to all other branches of the humanities."¹⁸⁴

¹⁸³ Ibid, p.93.

¹⁸⁴ Ibid, p.95.

The first "organisational question" Panofsky draws attention to is the fact that "in Germany the professors are stationary and the students mobile, whereas the opposite is true in the United States."¹⁸⁵ He recalls fondly the sense of independence that was given to each individual student in Germany, and how after gaining his *arbiturium* from the Gymnasium he was then free to enrol at any university of his choosing, "until he has found a teacher under whose direction he wishes to prepare his doctoral thesis."¹⁸⁶ This system impressed an individuality and encouraged a sense of responsibility upon the student's learning experience that was central to the German ideal of *Bildung*. The American system, where students were stationary and lecturers itinerant, had, according to Panofsky, serious drawbacks and disadvantages for the student:

More often than not he [the student] enters a given college because family tradition or financial reasons leave him no other choice, and a given graduate school because it happens to accept him. Even if he is satisfied with his choice the impracticability of exploring other possibilities will narrow his outlook and impair his initiative, and if he has made a mistake then the situation can develop into a real tragedy. In this event, the temporary contact with visiting lecturers will hardly suffice to counterbalance the crippling effect of an unsuitable environment and may even sharpen the student's sense of frustration.¹⁸⁷

It is worth repeating once more how, throughout this publication, Panofsky treads that delicate line when speaking of his experiences in Germany and America. Although clearly intent on pointing to the benefits of the German system of education, he is, nonetheless, at pains to stress his naturalisation in America and his comfort there. He refers to American institutions of higher education as "our colleges" and "our universities". He is aware of his status still as 'foreigner', and is keen to ingratiate himself with his American readership, and to 'soften the blow' of his criticisms of the American academic scene. He writes,

¹⁸⁵ Ibid, p.96.

¹⁸⁶ Ibid, p.96.

¹⁸⁷ Ibid, p98.

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. I merely want to point out that it has, like all man-made institutions, the defects of its qualities. And this also applies to other organisational features in which our academic life differs from that in Europe.¹⁸⁸

Panofsky then goes on to point to other 'defects' that he had identified in the American educatory system. Once more these criticisms were identified explicitly in terms of their relation to the German *Bildung* ideal. Panofsky pointed out that in Germany the student's individual path to learning was of paramount importance. The personal development of the student, the development of his or her spiritual and educational well-being, was brought about through an emphasis upon their own responsibility for their own process of education. Panofsky felt this to be central to a properly 'humanistic' approach to learning. He found the situation otherwise in America:

The European university, 'universitas magistrorum et scholarium', is a body of scholars, each surrounded by a cluster of famuli. The American college is a body of students entrusted to a teaching staff. 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.¹⁸⁹

In Germany the independence and responsibility of the individual student was emphasised through the interdependence of teaching and research. Student and scholar were envisaged as equal partners, the focus was upon the continuous

¹⁸⁸ Ibid.

¹⁸⁹ Ibid, p.102.

development of the subject. The teacher's role was not to impart knowledge but rather to heighten awareness of method in an effort to propel the individual student's own study. Such an approach emphasised to the student the fundamental fact that knowledge produced was of your own making. There was a subjectivity, a relativity inherent in humanistic discourse. Of his experience in Germany Panofsky wrote,

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...the aim of the academic process as such is to impart to the student, not a maximum of knowledge, but a maximum of adaptability – not so much to teach him subject matter but to teach him method.¹⁹⁰

Of his experience in America he writes, however,

The most basic problem which 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 honours, to that of the gardener who tries to make a tree grow.¹⁹¹

Panofsky believed that the transition from student to scholar was hampered by the relentlessly practical bent in American education, and by the fact that the emphasis was always upon teaching rather than research.

The young American master of arts or master of fine arts...will, as a rule, at once accept an instructorship or assistant professorship which normally entails a definite and often quite considerable number of teaching hours and in

¹⁹⁰ Ibid, p.104.

¹⁹¹ Ibid, pp.102-103.

addition...imposes upon him the tacit obligation to prepare himself, as speedily as possible, for a doctor's degree as a prerequisite of promotion. He still remains a cogwheel in a machinery, only that he now grades instead of being graded, and it is difficult for him to achieve that balance between teaching and research which is perhaps the finest thing in academic life.

Too often burdened with an excessive 'teaching load' – a disgusting expression which in itself is a telling symptom of the malady that I am attempting to describe – and no less often cut off from the necessary facilities, the young instructor or assistant professor is rarely in a position to follow up the problems encountered in the preparation of his classes; so that both he and his students miss the joyful and instructive experience which comes from a common venture into the unexplored. And never during his formative years has he had a 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.¹⁹²

As in those letters referred to previously (1055) & (1300), Panofsky once more returned to the benefits he felt were inherent in the German Gymnasium School's humanistic preparation. As this was so fundamental to his view of what constituted a good 'humanist' schooling, it is worth quoting him on this point, once more and at some length. Of American education he wrote,

Much remains to be done. And nothing short of a miracle can reach what I consider to be the root of our troubles, the lack of adequate preparation at the high school stage. Our public high schools – and even an increasing number of the fashionable and expensive private 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. First of all, it is, I think, a mistake to force boys and girls to make a decision between different kinds of curricula, some of them including no classical language, others no mathematics to speak of, at an age when they cannot possibly know what they will need in later life.

¹⁹² Ibid, pp.105-106.

I have still to meet the humanist who regrets that he had to learn some mathematics and physics in his 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.

However, even assuming that the future humanist was lucky enough to choose the right curriculum when he was thirteen or fourteen (and a recent survey has disclosed that of the million high school students in New York City only one thousand take Latin and only fourteen Greek), even then he has, as a rule, not been exposed to that peculiar and elusive spirit of scholarship which Gilbert Murray calls *religio grammatici* – that queer religion which makes its votaries both restless and serene, enthusiastic and pedantic, scrupulously honest and not a little vain. 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 know of their subject, and cares even less whether they are genuinely interested or actively engaged in it.

Panofsky returned once more to his own personal experience to emphasise his point, reiterating publicly what he had written privately to Harold Taylor in November 1945 (1055),

The typical German ‘Gymnasial-professor’ is – or at least was in my time – a man of many shortcomings, now pompous, now shy, often neglectful of his appearance, and blissfully ignorant of juvenile psychology. But though he was content to teach 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 what happened during the so-called Middle Ages. Facts will be presupposed; you are old enough to read books.'"

It is the sum total of experiences like these that makes for an education. This education should begin as early as possible, when minds are more retentive than ever after.¹⁹³

Panofsky obviously set enormous store in his own early educatory experience at the German Gymnasium. In 1955 he suggested,

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 programme of study which our progressive educators would consider exorbitant as well as unprofitable.¹⁹⁴

Panofsky was clearly aware of the sensitive and impracticable nature of attempting to transcribe the fundamentals of one academic and scholarly system into a different cultural and intellectual milieu. He cedes in his essay, "Traditions, rooted in the soil of one country and one continent, cannot and should not be transplanted."¹⁹⁵ But there can be no doubt that he felt strongly that the future of humanistic study was in danger in the American environment. He felt compelled to point out in 1953, however 'gently', the hindrances to a truly 'humanistic' approach to learning that were endemic to the American academic *Weltanschauung*.



27. Panofsky, Princeton, 1950s.

¹⁹³ Ibid, pp.107-109.

¹⁹⁴ Ibid, p.109.

¹⁹⁵ Ibid.

To end his autobiographical impressions of scholastic life on both sides of the Atlantic Panofsky broached the subject of freedom of learning. This central tenet of the German *Bildung* ideal had a real piquancy in American intellectual life of the early 1950s. Émigré scholars, like Panofsky, were especially wary of the dangers and the significance of McCarthyism and the fact that those at state institutions of learning were being coerced into signing an oath of allegiance. Though his essay was not without censure for the German academic environment that had witnessed the rise of Hitler and the National Socialists, Panofsky was nonetheless at pains to point out that freedom of inquiry, with the requisite implications of responsibility and tolerance, were central to the humanistic ethos. He ends by writing,

There would only be 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 1930s: nationalism and intolerance. We must, of course, be careful not to jump to conclusions. The foreigner is inclined to forget that history never repeats itself, at least not literally. The same virus produces different effects in different organisms, and one of the most hopeful differences is that, by and large, the American university teachers seem to wrestle against the powers of darkness instead of ministering to them...But we cannot blind ourselves to the fact that Americans may now be legally punished, not for what they have done, but for what they say or have said, think or have 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.

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. But there is more to it.

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 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 this confidence. He faces his students with a clouded conscience, and a man with a clouded conscience is a man diseased.

(iv) *Meaning in the Visual Arts*

Panofsky's contribution to the series of lectures published under the title "The Cultural Migration: The European Scholar in America" is central to understanding his views of intellectual and 'humanistic' scholarly life in America following the migration. It was obviously deemed very important by Panofsky himself. It was published again, just one year later in 'The College Art Journal' under the title 'Three Decades of Art History in the United States: Impressions of a Transplanted European.'¹⁹⁶ It was again republished once more in 1955, under the same title, but this time as the 'Epilogue' to Panofsky's book 'Meaning in the Visual Arts.'¹⁹⁷ Clearly by this time Panofsky felt more comfortable in his position in the United States. More so, he felt compelled to speak out and to defend and bolster his conception of art history as a humanistic discipline.

In light of the fact that Panofsky used 'Three Decades of Art History in the United States' as an 'Epilogue' to 'Meaning in the Visual Arts', this publication takes on a new significance in terms of understanding what this German scholar was attempting to do in the United States. As an 'Epilogue', his autobiographical impressions were obviously meant to be seen as a comment on and a conclusion to what had gone before in this publication. The book, a series of short essays, should be understood as a whole, and taken as a kind of scholarly manifesto by Panofsky. Here was Panofsky attempting to circumscribe, to translate and to emphasise the German humanist tradition of art history from which he came, for a still nescient American

¹⁹⁶ E. Panofsky, "Three Decades of Art History in the United States: Impressions of a Transplanted European", *College Art Journal*, 14:1, Autumn: 1954, pp.7-27.

¹⁹⁷ E. Panofsky, *Meaning in the Visual Arts: Papers in and on Art History*, New York, 1955.

audience. Panofsky republished 'The History of Art as a Humanistic Discipline' as his 'Introduction' to 'Meaning in the Visual Arts'. This essay, unchanged from its previous publication, once more presented Panofsky's apology for the discipline of art history; with the epistemological justification for the discipline lying in the historical consciousness of the practicing humanist, engendered through consciousness of the circularity of the hermeneutic method of interpretation.

Following up on this 'scholarly manifesto' in the 1955 publication came Panofsky's 'Introductory' to 'Studies In Iconology'. Panofsky once again drew attention to the circularity of the humanist art historian's methodology. This time however he made significant amendments to his terminology. The essay was republished in 1955 as 'Iconography and Iconology: An Introduction to the Study of Renaissance Art'. And Panofsky this time stressed more strongly and more overtly the difference and the relationship between the empirical-scientific stage of Iconography and the historical-interpretive stage of Iconology. As in his lecture of 1946, previously quoted from, Panofsky felt it more and more important as his time passed in America, to stress that art historical interpretation, at the Iconological level, involved the construction and the acknowledgement of art historical theories. Interpretation necessitated speculation, which in turn necessitated the recognition of one's own subjectivity and historical relativity. Art history could not exist as a 'science' in the narrower sense of the word. Panofsky felt it important to stress the interpretive character of Iconology for an American audience which had by that time, by and large, enthusiastically adopted Iconography as an 'objective' and 'scientific' art historical methodology.

Where Panofsky in the 1939 publication had differentiated between 'Iconographical analysis in the narrower sense' and 'Iconographical interpretation in a deeper sense',¹⁹⁸ in the 1955 edition he wrote, more explicitly,

The discovery and interpretation of... 'symbolical' values (which are often unknown to the artist himself and may even emphatically differ from what he consciously intended to express) is the object of what we may call 'iconology' as opposed to 'iconography'.

¹⁹⁸ E. Panofsky, *Studies in Iconology*, p.8.

"The suffix 'graphy' ", as he went on to explain,

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...In doing all this, iconography 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: the interplay between various 'types'; the influence of theological, philosophical or political ideas; the purposes and inclinations of individual artists and patrons; the correlation between intelligible concepts and the visible form which they assume in each specific case. 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...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. There is, however, admittedly

some danger that iconology will behave, not like ethnology as opposed to ethnography, but like astrology as opposed to astrography.¹⁹⁹

It was the critical hermeneutical relationship between iconography and iconology that defined Panofsky's art-historical methodology as 'humanist-historical'. And in 1955 he sought to make this relationship more explicit. The 'empirical-scientific' act of iconography checked the speculative iconological interpretation, just as the iconological interpretation conditioned the 'empirical-scientific' iconographical stage. The two were intrinsically linked in 'the system that made sense' – i.e. 'a historical synopsis'. Panofsky was obviously concerned that, due to the academic *Weltanschauung* in America, the iconographical stage was being adopted in isolation because of its apparently 'positivist' and 'scientific' grounding. There was less concern with the more important iconological level of interpretation because it was necessarily speculative and theoretical. Either that, or iconological interpretations were being made without the requisite detailed grounding in iconographical analysis. Panofsky was at pains to point out that real humanistic inquiry – interpretation of meaning – was dependent upon the recognition of the subjectivity involved in any interpretation. And that this subjectivity could be checked through empirical, 'objective' study. The two parts of the hermeneutical circle were mutually interdependent. The success of the iconographical/iconological method, as Panofsky had previously related to Henri van de Waal,²⁰⁰ lay in the spirit in which it was applied.

In an as yet unpublished letter from 1966, Panofsky looked back on the initial introduction of iconography and iconology to his American audience. His comments provide some insight into how he saw his art historical programme being interpreted in America, its relative success and failure. They also give an indication of just how much of an impression F.H. Taylor's criticisms had made twenty years earlier:

When it was published the very term 'iconology', as yet unknown in America, proved to be puzzling to certain colleagues and one of them (the late-lamented Francis Henry Taylor, the Director of the Metropolitan Museum) became so

¹⁹⁹ E. Panofsky, "Iconography and Iconology: An Introduction to the Study of Renaissance Art", in *Meaning in the Visual Arts*, 1955, pp.56-57 (Type in bold added).

²⁰⁰ Letter (1113) (November 20th 1946)

angry that he made me personally responsible for the rise of Hitler, saying that it was small wonder that students 'confronted with this kind of incomprehensible and useless investigation, turned to National Socialism in despair.' He, of course, had never heard of Ripa and his following; nor had he ever thought of the difference between iconology and iconography as it was understood before what may be called the iconological revolution...now, I am afraid, things have come to the point where iconology has entered a kind of mannerist phase which evidences both the successes and the dangers of what we have been trying to do during the last few decades.²⁰¹

In addition to the English language essays mentioned here in which Panofsky sought to transcribe his German humanist art-historical programme, the scholar also included in 'Meaning in the Visual Arts' translations of three essays he had written in Germany in the 1920's and 1930's, before his enforced migration. The first of these, 'The History of the Theory of Human Proportions as a Reflection of the History of Styles',²⁰² was an explicitly iconological-theoretical study, akin to his now much lauded 'Perspective as Symbolic Form'. In 'The History of the Theory of Human Proportions' Panofsky isolated the study of human proportions in art; he then interpreted the changes and manifestations that the studies of human proportions had undergone at various times in history, relating them to changes in style, and showing how such changes can be interpreted as indexes of changes in culture. In essence this essay was iconology put into demonstrative practice for an American audience. It was Panofsky's way of presenting to an American public the intellectual purpose and seriousness of art history as a vital humanistic discipline.

The other two earlier German essays translated into English for the first time in 'Meaning in the Visual Arts' are noteworthy for their equation of historical distance with a 'proper' historical perspective. In the first of these essays – 'The First Page of Giorgio Vasari's *Libro*: A Study on the Gothic Style in the Judgement of the Italian Renaissance',²⁰³ – Panofsky points to his great ancestor Giorgio Vasari, one of the first

²⁰¹ This is an excerpt of a letter from Panofsky to a Monsieur le Chevalier Guy de Schoutheete de Tervarent, a diplomat and iconographer, February 17th, 1966. It is quoted in J. Hart, "Erwin Panofsky and Karl Mannheim: A Dialogue on Interpretation", p.564, n.74.

²⁰² Originally published as "Die Entwicklung der Proportionslehre als Abbild der Stilentwicklung" in *Monatshefte für Kunstwissenschaft*, 14, 1921, pp.188-219.

²⁰³ Originally published as "Das erste Blatt aus dem 'Libro' Giorgio Vasaris: eine Studie über der Beurteilung der Gotik in der italienischen Renaissance mit einem Exkurs über zwei Fasadensprojekte

art historians, and shows how this renaissance writer was distinctive precisely because of his historicism. Panofsky relates how Vasari despite his contempt for the Gothic style, felt nevertheless compelled to provide a sketch he owned attributed to the venerated Cimabue, with a Gothic frame. This, for Panofsky, demonstrated Vasari's historical consciousness, his ability to objectively identify past styles, and to recognise the alterity of his own position in time, his own subjectivity. Panofsky, therefore, linked his own humanist art historical programme with the renaissance progenitor Vasari, the implicit reference being that the defining characteristic of both was a fundamental historical consciousness.

Similarly, in the third of his translated German essays – 'Albrecht Dürer and Classical Antiquity'²⁰⁴ – Panofsky posits the theory that Dürer, with his 'Germanic' sensibilities, was only able to confront antiquity via the mediation of Italian renaissance artists. He writes,

To approach classical art qua art, then, the North (i.e. Dürer) depended on an intermediary; and this intermediary was the art of the Italian Quattrocento (...) 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.²⁰⁵

Panofsky, as would be expected, turns what may seem to be a disadvantage for Dürer into an advantage. He continues, "he 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."²⁰⁶ Dürer is able, according to Panofsky, to confront and to understand Classical Antiquity precisely because of

Domenico Beccafumi" in *Städel-Jahrbuch*, 6, 1930, pp.25-72.

²⁰⁴ Originally published as "Dürer's Stellung zur Antike" in *Jahrbuch für Kunstgeschichte*, 1, 1921/2, pp.43-92.

²⁰⁵ E. Panofsky, *Meaning in the Visual Arts*, p.320 & pp.328-9.

²⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, p.329.

his distance from it. Much as in Panofsky's own hermeneutical method, historical distance is posited as the prerequisite of historical understanding.

It could be argued that 'Meaning in the Visual Arts' should be read, as a whole, as a manifesto which demands the recognition of historical relativity as the basis for art history as a humanistic discipline. For Panofsky, such recognition necessitated a historical-critical consciousness as the basis for all humanistic inquiry. This was the ingredient which Panofsky believed was lacking in the United States – a critical, theoretically conscious approach to the humanities. He felt that this was something that had to be transmitted and translated for an American audience.

Panofsky's work in America must be understood in this light. It was an attempt to circumscribe and translate a critical-historical approach to art history as a humanistic discipline. It was an attempt to transplant something of that tradition of German humanism in which Panofsky and his peers were fully immersed. Indeed, it could be argued that Panofsky's work in America presents this tradition for inspection. It is through understanding the circumstances of the migration in 1933 that we can identify this tradition as an area of study in itself. Studying Panofsky's work after his migration is akin to studying the clash of two cultures, yet somehow, strangely enough, without any clash. Panofsky's translation is so measured, so well judged that his work seems on the surface to segue smoothly into the American academic environment. There is no doubting that he was a real success in America. It must nevertheless be remembered that, as an émigré who was acutely aware of and finely attuned to his own 'difference', his own 'distance' in an alien environment, Panofsky could not, as it were, shout out his agenda from the rooftops. He had to use subtlety and ingratiate his historical concerns in America in a measured way. He was well aware that he could not simply transplant what had been a living and fully situated German tradition of scholarship into the American environment. He could only lead by example. Joan Hart makes the salient point that

There was no tradition in the United States comparable to that which had existed in Europe. Panofsky set about recreating the European tradition in the U.S. as far as he could, but he proceeded cautiously, with charm, and by

demonstrating the usefulness of iconology, not through theorising about it. He left his legacy through his students and his publications.²⁰⁷

To be fully understood, Panofsky's work in America has to be read in the spirit in which it was written. Panofsky's work merits the effort involved in giving it a full historical understanding.

Panofsky became less concerned in America with the interior dialogue of his discipline. The explicit theoretical and methodological debate with which he had been involved in Germany had no equivalent in America. Indeed, such debate was antithetical in the American approach to the humanities. In America Panofsky was more concerned with establishing the place of art history in the larger context of the humanities as a whole.



28. Panofsky at Stanford University, 1964.

One wonders, when contemplating historical distance, historical 'perspective', whether it should be any surprise that in the past twenty-five years or so there has been such a sustained reaction to Panofsky's American work. This polemical discourse, this 'Panofsky bashing', represents a criticism of the European humanist tradition as a whole. It must be remembered though, Panofsky and his generation, forced to flee their native country, and forced to come to terms with a different political, social, and intellectual milieu, had to find a place for their work in America in order to survive at all. In America there was not the intellectual and educational matrix to support the German-humanist tradition. Leading by example, figures such as Panofsky impacted most upon those students with whom they came into personal contact. Countless art historians of the next generation owe their interest in the subject, their conception of the subject to these German émigrés. As time passes and this generation itself comes to be regarded as 'traditional', certainly now a word of opprobrium, it should be no surprise that the humanist tradition itself undergoes severe censure. A new generation of scholars, evidencing less of a tangible link with the scholars of Panofsky's generation, and brought up in an environment where humanism was *not* intrinsic, seem keen to make their own mark upon the intellectual

²⁰⁷ J. Hart, "Panofsky and Mannheim", p.564.

landscape. They could do worse than heed the words of the 'old humanist' himself when he writes,

...tradition is not so much the enemy of freedom as its prerequisite, much as the water is not the enemy of the swimmer (unless he is a very bad swimmer) but that which enables him to swim. (1113) (November 20th 1946)

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