

Principles and Methods of a Marxist *Kunstwissenschaft*— Attempt at an Outline

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Preliminary Remarks

The following reflections were initially put together after an invitation by the Student Council for Art History at the Ludwig Maximilian University in Munich to speak on the given topic in a lecture series on Marxist art interpretation in November 1964. The interest that these remarks aroused, the subsequent discussions about them at the Institute of Art History at Humboldt University in Berlin and with other colleagues, and the fact that—to the best of my knowledge—there is no comparable survey in German give me hope that it might be useful to share them with a wider circle of friends in art and *Kunstwissenschaft* for further discussion.¹ The socialist cultural revolution makes high demands of *Kunstwissenschaft*, which must be satisfied in many areas: art historical research, art criticism, art theory, art conservation, art education, and popular science [*Populärwissenschaft*].² The fact that

¹ [Translators' notes in brackets here and below: The term *Kunstwissenschaft* (literally, “science of art”) does not have a precise English equivalent and is commonly translated as science of art, study of art, or even art history. While it is sometimes used interchangeably with *Kunstgeschichte* (art history), we have chosen to leave *Kunstwissenschaft* untranslated in order to preserve the text’s distinction between the two terms. However, for readability, we translate its derivatives, (e.g., *Kunstwissenschaftler*, *kunstwissenschaftlich*) into English, followed by the original German in brackets. All forms of *Kunstgeschichte* are translated into English without brackets. As we discuss at length in the introduction to this special issue, Feist’s book was written under pressure from GDR authorities to align art history with socialist cultural politics. *Kunstwissenschaft* subjected traditional art historical scholarship to the needs of contemporary artistic practice and art education in order to promote socialist consciousness among the masses.]

² [While the term “popular science” in English typically refers to the presentation of scientific research in an accessible manner for a general audience, the term *Populärwissenschaft* in German has a broader scope, encompassing research from all academic disciplines, not just the hard sciences. In the GDR, the public availability of scientific research was integral to the larger goal of “popularizing” (*popularisieren*) culture. This initiative aimed at granting less privileged classes entry to higher education, broadening the appeal of contemporary art, and steering art education towards the cultivation of a socialist personality. In his roughly contemporary position paper “On a

Kunstwissenschaft is lagging behind has been impatiently criticized from different quarters. The attempt to clarify its nature, possibilities, and tasks could help with the following: clearing up misunderstandings; giving tangible substance to the discussion; stimulating utterly necessary and thoroughly theoretical, methodological, and historical research; and—not least—further contributing to the dissemination of a Marxist-Leninist, dialectical-materialist *Kunstwissenschaft*. It would be misguided and an obstacle to the rapid development of this field [*Wissenschaft*] if one were to overlook that there are still clear gaps in the establishment of facts [*Tatsachenerfassung*], in methodology, even in the formulation of questions, and that we still cannot give fully satisfactory answers to many important questions about art and its history. Even so, within the framework of the most advanced and, indeed, adequate cognition of reality that is provided by dialectical and historical materialism, substantial accomplishments have been made to further the understanding of all processes and aspects of art. Consequently, more and more scholars are coming to the realization that real progress toward understanding the phenomenon of art cannot be achieved without taking Marxism into account.

My remarks do not constitute the final say on what Marxism “is” in *Kunstwissenschaft*. They are meant to contribute to it and its continuous development, which takes place naturally and in an ordered fashion [*gesetzmäßig*] through the work of many scholars and the perpetual transformation of objective reality. On some points, other Marxists will have different opinions. Given the current state of our field, this is inevitable, and I look forward to a thorough discussion. My reflections focus on the problem of *art’s historical development*, which also requires consideration of some problems of art theory. *Specific questions* about art criticism and the scholarly direction of contemporary cultural-political processes cannot be addressed within this framework, nor can those concerning the epistemology of general aesthetics or individual artistic processes. That being said, there is always a latent connection between my reflections and these questions. Incidentally, I use the term art [*Kunst*] to refer to the architectural, visual, and applied arts (with special consideration of the visual arts in the narrower sense). I am not qualified to write about other arts, such as literature, music, film, etc. However, it should be emphasized that the experiences gained in their practice, theory, and history can be fruitful for the study of the visual arts [*Wissenschaft von der bildenden Kunst*] as long as their respective specifics are not blurred.

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Conception of Art History” (1963/1965), Feist advocated for a popular outreach of art history “to deepen the ability for aesthetic experience, increase knowledge, expand the concept of history from the viewpoint of the working class, enhance the inner connection to contemporary art and judgment, and increase incentives for artistic activities.” See: Peter H. Feist, “Zu einer Konzeption der Kunstwissenschaft in der DDR in der Periode des umfassenden Aufbaues des Sozialismus,” 1963/1965 (?), manuscript, Getty Research Institute, Special Collections, DDR Collections, 940002, series 10, box 57, folder 3, 3-4.]

It is not easy to explain in such a limited space which philosophical, methodological, and practical features characterize the study of *Kunstwissenschaft* that arose from the insights won by Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels and were enriched by Vladimir Lenin, as well as many other scholars and revolutionaries. This understandably involves a very extensive complex of questions, about which there are ample manuals and edited volumes, countless journal articles, and many thoughts in the minds of many scholars.³ No more than a brief sketch can be given here of what seems to the author most characteristic and most important about Marxism in *Kunstwissenschaft*. This is not a closed and rigid system or an obligatory textbook but a personal contribution to the ongoing, global discussion about developing and improving art historical [*kunstwissenschaftlich*] or any other knowledge. It goes without saying that not all of these insights are my own, nor were they developed on my own; any activity requires that one utilize and carefully adapt as much as possible the insights of others and those much wiser—beginning with the classics of Marxism and ending with the comrades of various labor collectives.

Given its brevity, the greatest danger of this sketch is that its treatment of some issues might seem hasty, overly apodictic, undifferentiated, and perfunctory; that, in many cases, there is only one sentence where an entire essay is needed as proof; and what is formulated as a thesis is actually still just a working hypothesis. The second danger is that the brevity of its theoretical generalization will make it seem too abstract. Necessarily stripped of the flesh and blood of historical diversity and vivid examples, it may initially seem just as frightening as any skeleton. But when anatomists want to show the bones, the basic structure of the body, they use the bare skeleton for demonstration. The greatest value of this sketch might be that it reveals the variety and attraction of these still-open, as-yet-unresolved problems and the enticing possibility of solving them with the help of Marxism.

***Kunstwissenschaft* and Society**

Part of the character of Marxist *Kunstwissenschaft*, as we understand and try to practice and teach it in the GDR, includes what can be called an *operative Kunstwissenschaft*.⁴ This aspect is perhaps the most striking expression, though not the only one, of the fact that *Kunstwissenschaft* has to fulfill a social task predicated upon the stages of social development and their respective conditions and requirements. Part of this operative *Kunstwissenschaft* entails that scholarly inquiry, as well as museum and conservation work, actively account for the problems and needs of the present and for our socialist cultural revolution. Operative *Kunstwissenschaft* requires as its final goal the broadest commitment to popular education in

³ The references are somewhat more detailed to encourage further reading. See, for example: Institut für Philosophie and Institut für Kunstgeschichte der Akademie der Wissenschaften der UdSSR, eds., *Grundlagen der marxistisch-leninistischen Ästhetik* (Berlin: Dietz, 1962), translated from Russian; Hans Koch, *Marxismus und Ästhetik* (Berlin: Dietz, 1961); *Kunst und Literatur = Sowjetwissenschaft. Zeitschrift zur Verbreitung sowjetischer Erfahrungen* (Berlin: Volk und Welt, 1953 ff.).

⁴ [See the introduction and Katja Bernhardt's essay in this special issue for a detailed explanation of operative *Kunstwissenschaft*.]

the field of aesthetics and art history—in other words, popular science as the objective of scholarly work; and finally, and especially, it requires the theoretical and practical promotion of socialist contemporary art in a variety of ways as the overall task for *Kunstwissenschaft*.⁵ This necessitates, among other things, the close cooperation of art scholars [*Kunstwissenschaftler*] with the Association of Visual Artists of Germany and the Federation of German Architects, with art schools and academies, as well as dealing with the problems of art education in schools and of amateur art [*Laienkunstschaffen*], with the sociology of art reception and of amateur art, etc.⁶

But here, I want to focus specifically on art historical questions pertaining to the Marxist interpretation of the artwork and artistic development. It is necessary to remain conscious of the fundamental position that *Marxist Kunstwissenschaft*—conceived as an indivisible dialectical unity of art historiography, contemporary art criticism, and art theory (specifically, the aesthetics of the visual, built, and applied arts)—is not pursued in an ivory tower, alone at the scholar’s desk, or as an end in itself. Ultimately, it is carried out on *behalf and in service of society*, in contact with the praxis of social life, and aware of the obligation to those who, through their work, secure the material conditions that sustain the scholar. Of course, scholars can only fulfill this social mandate if they have within themselves the necessary enthusiasm for their object of study, for the unquenchable thirst for knowledge, and likewise for the impact of their findings on humanist progress.

Since the Marxist scholar cannot conduct their work in isolation from their existence as a social being, as a “political animal” [*zoon Politikon*], they answer the question of the relation between their work and the mandate of society in accordance with Lenin’s famous 1905 essay “Party Organization and Party Literature.” What Lenin said of literature also applies to scholarly work—especially in the social sciences—that deals with the creation of art, an activity that is required and determined by society and, in turn, acts upon it:

One cannot live in society and be free from society. The freedom of the bourgeois writer, artist, or actress is simply masked (or hypocritically masked) dependence on the money-bag, on corruption, on prostitution. [Namely, through publishers, bourgeois audiences, etc. — P. F.] And we socialists expose this hypocrisy... not in order to arrive at a non-class literature and art (that will be possible only in a socialist extra-class society), but to contrast this hypocritically free literature, which is in reality linked to the bourgeoisie, with a really free one that will be openly linked to the

⁵ On popular science, see: Georg Klaus, *Die Macht des Wortes* (Berlin: Deutscher Verlag der Wissenschaften, 1964), chapter 7 and in *Der Sonntag*, no. 4, November 29, 1964.

⁶ [Since the late 1950s, the promotion of popular and amateur art (*Volkskunst* or *Laienkunst*) was a key component of cultural policy in the GDR. State initiatives encouraged the artistic production of all citizens as cultural “mass work” (*Massenarbeit*), through which they would contribute to the formation of socialist culture. For a history of the political ideologization of amateur and folk art in the early GDR, see: Cornelia Kühn, *Die Kunst gehört dem Volke? Volkskunst in der frühen DDR zwischen politischer Lenkung und ästhetischer Praxis* (Münster: LIT Verlag, 2015); and for a broader contextualization, see: Gerd Dietrich, *Kultugeschichte der DDR*, vol. 2, *Kultur in der Bildungsgesellschaft 1958–1976*, 2nd ed. (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2019), 844–51.]

proletariat. It will be a free literature... because it will serve, not... the “upper ten thousand”... but the millions and tens of millions of working people.⁷

The key to solving the problem of the relationship between *partisanship and objectivity* lies in the last sentence of the quotation. Marxism has recognized, or more openly expressed and conclusively proven, what other historians of science have also observed: every theory, idea, interpretation of facts, etc., that strives for impartial objectivity is, in a way, “one-sided” and aims to serve certain interests more or less consciously, simply through the inevitable selection of the facts to be interpreted. Marxism has recognized these interests as ultimately class interests. Now, the socialist could be content with conscious, partisan advocacy for working-class concerns, as Lenin in 1905 demanded of the social democratic authors in Russia. However, Marxists are also convinced that by finally eliminating class divisions in society—thereby eliminating one class’s exploitation of the other—the goals of the revolutionary class are entirely in line with those of the overwhelming majority of people for the first time. Therefore, no more deception or self-deception, no more false theory is necessary to maintain a class society. Consequently, the path is finally free to the full and objective truth that seems to serve no interests at all but is actually in the interest of all. In other words, scientific knowledge and statements are in complete agreement with the objective reality that exists outside our consciousness.

Philosophical materialism assumes there is an *objective reality*, which has primacy over the consciousness that reflects it, and that this reality is discernible in principle. Marxist epistemology says that absolute truth is a collection of relative truths that lead us in a sort of infinite hyperbolic progression to absolute truth, yet without us ever being able to fully grasp it.⁸ For practical questions within specific scientific disciplines, it is possible to obtain absolute truths and irrefutably correct insights about many issues. By further expanding our knowledge and refining our methods, we will not be able to explain precisely why this or that artistic phenomenon has manifested in this way and not another, but we can still provide a reasonably coherent account.

Fundamental Principles of Marxist *Kunstwissenschaft*

After these preliminary questions, I would now like to share a few thoughts on the most important principles of Marxism in *Kunstwissenschaft*. These principles are encapsulated by the term “*dialectical materialism*.” This concept forms the basis of Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels’s explanation for nature and society that they developed in the 1840s, drawing on classical German philosophy, especially Hegel, materialism up to Feuerbach, the English

⁷ Vladimir Ilyich Lenin, “Parteiorganisation und Parteiliteratur (1905),” in *Über Kultur und Kunst* (Berlin: Dietz, 1960), 59–64, esp. 63 f. [English translation from Vladimir Ilyich Lenin, “Party Organisation and Party Literature,” in *Collected Works*, vol. 10, *November 1905–June 1906*, 2nd ed. (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1965), 48.]

⁸ See: Vladimir Ilyich Lenin, *Materialismus und Empirio-kritizismus* [1909] (Berlin: Dietz, 1949), 124 ff.

political economy of Smith and Ricardo, and French utopian socialism.⁹ Marxist *Kunstwissenschaft* takes these fundamental insights, which are constantly being expanded and differentiated, and combines them with new practical experiences under new, thus different, conditions and with the critically reviewed facts and methodologies [that constitute] the rational core of all art historical [*kunstwissenschaftlich*] research to date.

The Existence of Laws

One of the key findings of Marxism is that there are laws of social development that, indeed, are only enacted through human activities and that the efficacy and manifestation of these laws are subject to influence. Among the laws of social development, and thus also of art historical development and artistic creation, there are those that generally apply to all of known history and those that are valid only for a specific stage of social development, such as within the socioeconomic formation of capitalism.¹⁰ However, it must be strongly emphasized that these laws are not as rigorous as natural laws; due to humankind's conscious actions and decision-making capabilities, no two historical processes can repeat themselves. It is also not always possible to conduct scientific experiments under the same conditions. But that did not preclude Marx—based on a detailed study of capitalist relations of production—from discovering the principles that drive the mechanics of bourgeois society in its various stages, regardless of whether people are aware of them. Neither did it prevent Marx and those after him from realizing and proving, historically and practically, that such principles, such innate laws of historical, economic, social, and ideological developments, do indeed exist.

Many non-Marxists are of a similar opinion. Key chapters in the history of *Kunstwissenschaft* have been devoted to searching for the laws of artistic creation and, in particular, artistic development, stylistic progression, and the like. Significant and lasting results have been achieved in the process.

However, dialectical materialism decisively sets itself apart from three kinds of so-called laws postulated by this research approach. The first is the notion that style develops either without further rationale or under the influence of a non-human force or fixed psychological constants; therefore, it follows that style repeatedly undergoes identical cycles or

⁹ See: Institut für Philosophie and Institut für Kunstgeschichte der Akademie der Wissenschaften der UdSSR, eds., *Grundlagen der marxistischen Philosophie* (Berlin: Dietz, 1962), translated from Russian; Georg Klaus, Alfred Kosing, and Götz Redlow, eds., *Wissenschaftliche Weltanschauung. Teil I: Dialektischer Materialismus* (Berlin: Dietz, 1959); Wolfgang Eichorn et al., eds., *Wissenschaftliche Weltanschauung. Teil II: Historischer Materialismus* (Berlin: Dietz, 1959–61).

¹⁰ See: Georg Klaus and Manfred Buhr, eds., *Philosophisches Wörterbuch* (Leipzig: Bibliographisches Institut, 1965), 220 ff.; Günter Kroeber, "Die methodologische Bedeutung des marxistisch-leninistischen Gesetzesbegriffs für die Gesellschaftswissenschaften," *Deutsche Zeitschrift für Philosophie* 12 (1964), 30–44; A. W. Gulyga, "Einige logische Probleme der Geschichtswissenschaft," *Deutsche Zeitschrift für Philosophie*, vol. 13, no. 7 (1965), 864–74; Hans Schulze, "Die spekulative bürgerliche Geschichtsphilosophie über den Sinn der Geschichte," *Einheit*, vol. 20, no. 10 (1965), 65–74.

oscillates between two poles, two tendencies—whether they are called classical or baroque, classical or gothic, abstraction and empathy, schizothymic and cyclothymic, or something else.¹¹ There are also no exact repetitions in history because the manifestation of what happens in each moment determines everything that follows, and therefore, “you cannot step into the same river twice.”¹² So, we must examine every single situation in its particularity. In addition, there are no abiding abstract poles of artistic creation [*abstrakte Pole des Gestaltens*] that inherently keep art history in motion.¹³

However, the following is a different matter: In the confrontation of antagonistic classes, the ripening of a revolution, the victory and rise to power of a new class, the way it establishes and expands its rule, and—particularly in the case of a new exploiting class—how it becomes increasingly reactionary, we see the repetition of the basic features of certain stages and forms of social development. These are, in turn, reflected in such stylistic phases as “Archaic—Classical—Baroque—Dissolution.”¹⁴ This question, however, has not been sufficiently worked through. To answer it, we must take into account that there is a relative autonomy of art, an “inner movement of the material” [*Eigenbewegung des Stoffes*] in our discipline, and that, in certain respects, artistic problems and solutions emerge primarily or

¹¹ [“Schizothymia” and “cyclothymia” are typological concepts introduced by psychiatrist and National Socialist eugenicist Ernst Kretschmer to describe the alleged links between physiological features and psychological traits with a potential predisposition to psychotic disorders. Ernst Kretschmer, *Physique and Character: An Investigation of the Nature of Constitution and of the Theory of Temperament*, trans. W. J. H. Sprott (London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trubner, 1925). The terms were later adopted by Hans Sedlmayr to characterize Borromini and his art. On Sedlmayr’s use of Kretschmer, see: Evonne Levy, *Baroque and the Political Language of Formalism (1845–1945): Burckhardt, Wölfflin, Gurlitt, Brinckmann, Sedlmayr* (Basel: Schwabe, 2015), 318–20.]

¹² [Feist cites here an aphorism commonly attributed to Heraclites. Hermann Diels and Walther Kranz, eds., *Die Fragmente der Vorsokratiker*, 9th ed. (Berlin: Weidmannsche Verlagsbuchhandlung, 1959–60), B12, 154; B49a, 161.]

¹³ [Here, Feist is most likely referring to Wilhelm Worringer and his “two poles of artistic volition,” empathy and abstraction. He may also be alluding to Wölfflin’s pairs of stylistic principles, or more specifically to the opposition of “linear” and “painterly” modes of seeing; another possible reference is Warburg’s psychological “balancing” of anthropomorphic image and mathematical sign. Wilhelm Worringer, *Abstraction and Empathy: A Contribution to the Psychology of Style*, trans. Michael Bullock (Chicago: Ivan R. Dee, 1997), 4; Heinrich Wölfflin, *Principles of Art History: The Problem of the Development of Style in Later Art*, trans. M. D. Hottinger, 7th ed. (Mineola: Dover Publications, 1950), 18–19; Aby Warburg, “Pagan-Antique Prophecy in Words and Images in the Age of Luther (1920),” in *The Renewal of Pagan Antiquity*, trans. David Britt (Los Angeles: Getty Research Institute, 1999), 597–697, here 650–51.]

¹⁴ [“Dissolution” (*Auflösung*) may refer to Wölfflin’s characterization of the Baroque as “dissolving” classical linear silhouettes and plastic surfaces in favor of a more painterly style, or perhaps to Sedlmayr’s anti-modernist “dissolution of the boundaries of art.” Wölfflin, *Principles of Art History*, 10, 21, 26, 107, 159, 202; Hans Sedlmayr, *Art in Crisis: The Lost Centre*, trans. Brian Battershaw (London: Hollis & Carter, 1958), 92–94.]

even exclusively as a result of previous artistic achievements.¹⁵ What Friedrich Engels wrote in regard to philosophy therefore also applies to art:

But the philosophy of every epoch, since it is a definite sphere in the division of labor, has as its presupposition certain definite intellectual material handed down to it by its predecessors, from which it takes its start... Here, economy creates nothing absolutely new (*a novo*), but it determines the way in which the existing material of thought is altered and further developed, and that too for the most part indirectly, for it is the political, legal, and moral reflexes which exercise the greatest direct influence upon philosophy.¹⁶

But we are getting ahead of ourselves.

The second pseudo-law, which we do not acknowledge, is that of biologism as it appears, for example, in Wilhelm Pinder's assertion of the primacy of entelechies "born from mysterious processes of nature," of the "regular grouping of decisive births," and of generations as "nature's decisive casts [of the dice]."¹⁷ History is a social and not a biological phenomenon. What is correct about Pinder's observations of the generations and the heterogeneity of the simultaneous is partly due to the commonality of the problems in a given time frame and to the long-lasting significance of such problems, which are encountered by the artist in their beginnings and early maturity; it also stems in part from the struggle of different, usually class-related trends in an era.

Similarly, but even more blatantly biological and irrational, are all hypotheses about the immutability and defining character of tribal or even racial factors, as well as subsequent claims about the abilities and inabilities, the superiority and inferiority of cultures, peoples, etc.¹⁸ Marxism, of course, does not deny the existence and artistic impact of national or tribal

¹⁵ [First coined by Paul Ernst, "Eigenbewegung des Stoffes" is a concept from literary theory. It suggests that the development and interpretation of literary and artistic works are guided by their own internal dynamics and logic, influenced not by external factors (e.g., authorial intent or social content) but by the intrinsic qualities and tendencies of the medium or subject matter itself. Paul Ernst, *Der Weg zur Form: Abhandlungen über die Technik vornehmlich der Tragödie und Novelle* (Munich: Georg Müller, 1928).]

¹⁶ Friedrich Engels, "Brief an Conrad Schmidt, 27. 10. 1890," in Michael Lifschitz, ed., *Karl Marx: Friedrich Engels: Über Kunst und Literatur* (Berlin: Henschelverlag, 1948), 7 f. [English translation from Friedrich Engels to Conrad Schmidt, October 27, 1890, in *Karl Marx, Frederick Engels: Collected Works* [henceforth *MECW*], vol. 49, *Engels: 1890–1892* (New York: International Publishers, 2001), 62–63.]

¹⁷ Wilhelm Pinder, *Das Problem der Generation in der Kunstgeschichte Europas* (Berlin: Frankfurter Verlags-Anstalt, 1926), 25, 30, 154, i. a.; Pinder also assumes the existence of two "permanent poles," whose influence creates the historical rhythm (cf. 141 ff.).

¹⁸ Such views are also held in part by: Kurt Bauch, *Abendländische Kunst* (Düsseldorf: L. Schwann, 1952), esp. 29 ff., 96 f. See: Peter H. Feist, "Aus der Geschichte des Tierbezwinger-Motivs," *Wissenschaftliche Zeitschrift der Humboldt-Universität Berlin. Gesellschafts- und sprachwissenschaftliche Reihe* 9 (1959/60), 125–38, esp. 125–27 for K. Bauch's conception of the occident.

characters [*Stammescharaktern*], but it primarily examines their historical development and transformations through their living, economic, and social relations.¹⁹ We consider the mutual learning of peoples from one another, the ability of all people to achieve greatness, and the fundamental equality of creative potential in different peoples to be more important than their historically uneven development to date. Proof can be seen in the rapid unfolding of realistic art among the peoples in the Asian region of the Soviet Union or the young nation-states of the Arab world, that is, among peoples who were previously restricted for centuries to ornamental arts and crafts due to economic and social backwardness and the Islamic prohibition of images. Respect for the creative capacity of all people also characterizes the Marxist attitude toward the problem of “world art” and overcoming Eurocentrism.²⁰

But what are the laws of art historical development? Some will only be addressed when I examine the workings of dialectics in history and the materialistic explanation of art history in more detail. Others I will put forward here:

People spare themselves unnecessary duplicate inventions, even in art. Wherever the external conditions allow the individual artist or the art of an entire country to utilize the experiences of others from elsewhere or earlier to solve the challenges posed at a certain stage

¹⁹ [Here, Feist employs an ethnocentric vocabulary cultivated in the fields of “geography of art” (*Kunstgeographie*) and “cultural psychology” (*Völkerpsychologie*) that were pivotal in shaping nineteenth-century notions of national “physiognomies” and later paved the way for the crudely racist discourses used in National Socialist *völkisch* propaganda. For a broad overview, see: Hubert Locher, “Stilgeschichte und die Frage der ‘nationalen Konstante,’” *Zeitschrift für Schweizerische Archäologie und Kunstgeschichte*, vol. 53, no. 4 (1996), 285–94. The concept of racially distinct “tribal” characteristics continued to circulate in the 1960s through the works of Wölfflin, Pevsner, and others mentioned in Feist’s list of recommended literature. Feist’s teacher Worringer also emphasized the importance of space and geography in art, situating his two “poles” of artistic creation within ethnic and cultural groups labeled “primitive,” Greek “Classic,” “Oriental,” and “Northern.” See: Worringer, *Abstraction and Empathy*; Claudia Öhlschläger, “Abstraktion im Licht der Faszination: Wilhelm Worringer am Ort des Primitivismus,” in Nicola Gess, ed., *Literarischer Primitivismus* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2013), 59–73. Feist’s insistence on the existence of such national “traits” is surprising and at odds with earlier Marxists, such as Meyer Schapiro, “Race, Nationality and Art,” *Art Front*, vol. 2, no. 4 (1936), 10–12. In West Germany, a critical examination of the inherent racism of the “geography of art” and ethnocentric “spatial style” (*Raumstil*) took place shortly after the publication of Feist’s *Principles and Methods*. See, for example: Reiner Hausscherr, “Kunstgeographie: Aufgaben, Grenzen, Möglichkeiten,” *Rheinische Vierteljahrsblätter* 34 (1970), 158–71. Although GDR scholars denounced the misuse of these concepts by the National Socialists, they nevertheless remained committed to regional mapping and, to some extent, the recognition of ethnic differences. Drawing on Soviet ethnopsychology, Friedrich Möbius, for instance, advocated for a sociological approach to ethnic “characters,” contending that they were shaped—even at the neurological level—by material production and cultural reproduction. Friedrich Möbius, “Von der Kunstgeographie zur Kunstwissenschaftlichen Territorienforschung,” in Friedrich Möbius and Helga Scurie, eds., *Regionale, Nationale und Internationale Kunstprozesse* (Jena: Friedrich-Schiller-Universität, 1983), 21–42, here 31–33.]

²⁰ Cf. Die Akademie der Künste der UdSSR, Institut für Theorie und Geschichte der bildenden Kunst under the direction of Anton Dimitrievics Csegodaev et al., eds., *Die Allgemeine Geschichte der Kunst*, translation from Russian (Leipzig: E. A. Seemann, 1962 ff.) (forthcoming).

of development, these models will be drawn upon and adapted to the artist's own situation. Every conceivable influence will take effect; here, influence is understood as adoption, as an active process on the part of the adopter, as the capacity of a progressive element, not as the irruption of foreign matter into an inert [*schlaffes*] vacuum.

This law is complemented by a second one: influence, or adoption, only takes place when the adopter needs it, when their own stage of development predisposes them to it, and when the ensuing achievements help them solve their own historical problems. Therefore, a process of selection and adaptation takes place, and, in certain circumstances, more advanced achievements may be overlooked because they are not yet internally accessible or usable to the adopter. One example of this is the behavior of the Germanic peoples in the early Middle Ages, who first incorporated components of Oriental and folk art from their late antique heritage that were closer to their artistic views.²¹ Another is the relationship of German art around 1500 to the Italian Renaissance, which drew on the older masters Mantegna, Bellini, and Donatello, not on Leonardo, Giorgione, or Michelangelo. In this regard, it is remarkable that Marx, without thinking of art, once wrote that humanity only sets itself tasks that it is capable of accomplishing.²²

The Marxist Conception of Art and History

A critical component of Marxism is *philosophical materialism*. Its particular relevance for *Kunstwissenschaft* is twofold. First, it provides a foundation for general aesthetics as well as a specialized art theory and clarifies the relation between art and reality. It helps explain the peculiarities of artistic creation as a form of consciousness and production, the relations between labor and the arts, and the relationship between form and content in the work of art, among other things. Its essential premises are found in the Marxist philosophical reflection theory, as it was developed, in particular, by Lenin in his book *Materialism and Empirio-Criticism*.²³ Second, philosophical materialism provides the most effective tools for explaining the art-historical process, the conditions for and causes of the emergence and transformation of artistic phenomena. Both of these conceptual aspects are linked and cannot be clearly separated.

Here, however, the greater emphasis will be placed on the second. This is because questions regarding the specialized theory of art history have received insufficient attention in Marxist literature in contrast to the abundant writings on the problems of general

²¹ [Feist wrote his *Diplom* thesis on the influence of ancient near Eastern motifs on Romanesque art, particularly in Germany. In Germany, the *Diplom* is roughly equivalent to a combined BA/MA degree in the US. Peter H. Feist, "Untersuchungen zur Bedeutung orientalischer Einflüsse für die Kunst des frühen Mittelalters," *Wissenschaftliche Zeitschrift der Martin-Luther-Universität Halle-Wittenberg, Gesellschafts- u. sprachwissenschaftliche Reihe*, vol. 2, no. 2 (1952/53), 27–79.]

²² Karl Marx, "Zur Kritik der politischen Ökonomie. Vorwort [1859]," in *Über Kunst und Literatur*, 3. The problems of influence and self-development have also been investigated by numerous non-Marxist researchers.

²³ Lenin, *Materialismus und Empiriekritizismus*. See also: Georg Klaus, *Spezielle Erkenntnistheorie* (Berlin: Deutscher Verlag der Wissenschaften, 1965).

aesthetics and art theory, which are also significant for socialist cultural policy and art criticism.²⁴ Moreover, now that the longstanding obstruction and desolation caused by dogmatism has subsided, the views of many Marxist art theorists—for example, on the *nature of art* or *realism*—are currently colliding in a discussion so lively, interesting, and important that it would be irresponsible to dwell on it only in passing.²⁵ An in-depth review, however, is not possible in the context of this work, which has other goals. It should only be noted that this discussion leaves a number of issues still open.

This discussion also brings us to our main topic: art can be judged from both the standpoint of the social “consumer,” or the *viewer*, and in consideration of its function as a personal statement, that is, a self-expression of the *artist*. The individual has been irrevocably set free in the modern age and continues to evolve steadily, wielding art to find their place in the world and to make the world their own in a particular way. Today, the artist’s need for personal expression and creation [*Gestaltung*] is one of the guiding principles of artistic practice. However, this need is not nearly as absolute as late bourgeois art theory would like it to be, which, as a general rule, presupposes a self-aggrandizing and isolated individual artist. Psychology and depth psychology (psychoanalysis) have taught us that an artist can paint from the soul to rid themselves of their longings or fears—including those hidden from them—and, in some circumstances, does so. But Marxist *Kunstwissenschaft*, like Marxist psychology, does not see the human soul as eternally unchangeable but rather as both biologically and socially conditioned.²⁶

²⁴ I will only name a few selected works here: Wolfgang Heise, “Zu einigen Grundfragen der marxistischen Ästhetik,” *Deutsche Zeitschrift für Philosophie*, vol. 5, no. 1 (1957), 50–81; Eberhard Bartke, “Über den Grundstreit der modernen Ästhetik,” *Kunst und Literatur*, vol. 9, no. 11 (1961), 1125–49; Erhard John, *Einführung in die Ästhetik* (Leipzig: Bibliographisches Institut, 1963); Tamara Motyljowa, “Zum Streit über den Realismus des 20. Jahrhunderts,” *Kunst und Literatur*, vol. 11, no. 2 (1963), 153–70; Jurij Rjurikow, “Persönlichkeit – Kunst – Wissenschaft. Bemerkungen über die Methodologie der Ästhetik,” *Kunst und Literatur*, vol. 12, no. 6 (1964), 553–77; Moissej S. Kagan, “Die Dialektik des Ästhetischen,” *Kunst und Literatur*, vol. 12, no. 10 (1964), 1012–29 and other articles by the same author in subsequent issues; Bertolt Brecht, *Schriften zum Theater*, vol. 7 (Berlin/Weimar: Aufbau-Verlag, 1964); Erwin Pracht, “Mythos und Realismus,” *Deutsche Zeitschrift für Philosophie*, vol. 13, no. 7 (1965), 806–27; Marian Váross, “Das Problem des Realismus,” *Tendenzen*, vol. 6, no. 31 (1965), 5–14; Jurij Borew, “Zeit – Kunst – Mode,” *Kunst und Literatur*, vol. 14, no. 1 (1966), 1–18 and no. 2 (1966), 113–25.

²⁵ [Here, Feist is referring to the formalism debates during the so-called thaw in cultural policy after Stalin’s death in 1953. See Katja Bernhardt’s essay in this special issue for an account of how these debates saw renewed energy in the 1960s when Feist wrote his text. For an introduction to the “thaw” and Soviet culture more broadly, see: Denis Kozlov and Eleonory Gilburd, “The Thaw as an Event in Russian History,” in Denis Kozlov and Eleonory Gilburd, eds., *The Thaw: Soviet Society and Culture During the 1950s and 1960s* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2013), 18–81.]

²⁶ Marxist *Kunstwissenschaft* must immediately turn to the psychology of artistic creation and reception with greater intensity than before. Starting points for this can be found primarily in the works of Sergej L. Rubinstein, *Grundlagen der allgemeinen Psychologie* (Berlin: Volk und Wissen, 1958) and *Sein und Bewußtsein* (Berlin: Akademie-Verlag, 1962).



1. James Ensor, *Christ's Entry into Brussels in 1889*, 1888, oil on canvas, 99.4 x 169.7 in. (252.6 x 431 cm). J. Paul Getty Museum, Los Angeles.

It asks, for example, what an artist is afraid of and how that fear is expressed, then relates that to their conditions of existence. Hence, I consider the predilection for masks in painting since the fin de siècle, as seen most strikingly in the work of James Ensor, to be at least partly determined by the following: the excessive concealment of the forces regulating social life in developed capitalism, the utter inscrutability of social processes, and the increasing deception and misdirection of people in defense of the deteriorating conditions. Ensor's artistic experience of enormous crowds—his terror of teeming swarms of masked people—is only conceivable in a time of great social and political mass movements. It is not by chance that the masses carry a banner with a socialist slogan in the *Entry of Christ into Brussels* from 1889 [sic], the year of the foundation of the Second International²⁷ (Fig. 1) Of this, Ensor was afraid.

This brings us to the key issue of how *art is determined* by society and the economy. Marx and Engels repeatedly expressed their views on this subject. Let us call to mind their most important summary statements.

In his preface to *A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy* (1859), Marx wrote,

In the social production of their existence, men inevitably enter into definite relations, which are independent of their will, namely relations of production appropriate to a

²⁷ [The painting is from 1888. The year "1889" instead appears in the painting's title (*The Entry of Christ into Brussels in 1889*) since the work was conceived as a satirical prophecy.]

given stage in the development of their material forces of production. The totality of these relations of production constitutes the economic structure of society, the real foundation, on which a legal and political superstructure arises and to which correspond definite forms of social consciousness. The mode of production of material life conditions the general process of social, political, and intellectual life. It is not the consciousness of men that determines their existence, but their social existence that determines their consciousness. At a certain stage of development, the material productive forces of society come into conflict with the existing relations of production or—this merely expresses the same thing in legal terms—with the property relations within the framework of which they have operated hitherto. From forms of development of the productive forces, these relations turn into their fetters. Then begins an era of social revolution. The changes in the economic foundation sooner or later lead to the transformation of the whole immense superstructure. In studying such transformations, it is always necessary to distinguish between the material transformation of the economic conditions of production, which can be determined with the precision of natural science, and the legal, political, religious, artistic, or philosophic—in short, ideological forms in which men become conscious of this conflict and fight it out. Just as one does not judge an individual by what he thinks about himself, so one cannot judge such a period of transformation by its consciousness, but, on the contrary, this consciousness must be explained from the contradictions of material life, from the conflict existing between the social forces of production and the relations of production.²⁸

Thirty years later, Engels defended this position, which he and Marx had already elaborated in the 1845 manuscript for *The German Ideology*, against vulgarizing and simplistic imitators:²⁹

According to the materialist view of history, the determining factor in history is, in the final analysis, the production and reproduction of actual life. More than that was never maintained either by Marx or myself... The economic situation is the basis, but the various factors of the superstructure—political forms of the class struggle and its consequences—...and the reflections of all these real struggles in the minds of the participants... also have a bearing on the course of the historical struggles of which, in many cases, they largely determine the form.³⁰

And later again:

Political, juridical, philosophical, religious, literary, artistic, etc., development is based on economic development. But each of these also reacts upon the others and upon the

²⁸ *Über Kunst und Literatur*, 3. [English translation from Karl Marx, “A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy,” in *MECW*, vol. 29, *Marx: 1857–1861* (New York: International Publishers, 1987), 263.]

²⁹ *Über Kunst und Literatur*, 4.

³⁰ Friedrich Engels, “Brief an Joseph Bloch, 21. 9. 1890,” in *Über Kunst und Literatur*, 6. [English translation from Friedrich Engels to Joseph Bloch, September 21, 1890, in *MECW*, vol. 49, 34–35.]

economic basis. This is not to say that the economic situation is the cause and that it alone is active while everything else is a mere passive effect, but rather that there is reciprocal action based in the final analysis on economic necessity, which invariably prevails.³¹

It is evident from their other theoretical writings and practical appraisals of artistic or other ideological phenomena that Marx, Engels, Lenin, and Marxist scholars accounted for the “inner movement of the material” [*Eigenbewegung des Stoffes*], that is, the relative autonomy of artistic development and the specificity of art as a particular human mode of behavior and expression. These other aspects of, let us say, the history of forms [*Formgeschichte*] or intellectual history are extensively and often excellently researched and presented by non-materialist art historians. However, their social and economic roots, in particular, are usually denied, brushed over, or unacknowledged in their true meaning. For this reason, Marxists place special emphasis on these latter aspects without negating the former.

In front of a work of art, we ask, among other things: How does it reflect the situation of the relations of production, namely, property relations, which are themselves determined by a certain state of the productive forces (i.e., technology, commerce, human experience, etc.)? How does it represent the social structure and the antagonism of classes and social strata? Which social and class forces stand behind a particular work of art, are invested in its existence and its potential effect, or have at least produced the conditions for such an artist to come into being and for such a work of art to emerge in terms of its function, theme, content, and form?

Marxists also take into account the problems of capitalist conditions that Lenin exposed in 1913:

The elements of democratic and socialist culture are present, if only in rudimentary form, in every national culture since, in every nation, there are toiling and exploited masses whose conditions of life inevitably give rise to the ideology of democracy and socialism. But every nation also possesses a bourgeois culture (and most nations a reactionary and clerical culture as well) in the form, not merely of “elements,” but of the dominant culture.³²

Of course, we not only ask about these social and class forces but also how the work of art enriches people’s knowledge and their world of experience [*Erlebniswelt*] and how it advances humanity, both in the time of its creation and beyond to the present day. We should not overlook the fact that art does not simply reflect a given social situation; as a creative act, it also works upon society to change it. Art scholars [*Kunstwissenschaftler*] know that

³¹ Friedrich Engels, “Brief an Hans Starkenburg, 25. 1. 1894,” in *Über Kunst und Literatur*, 4. [English translation from Friedrich Engels to W. Borgius (Starkenbourg), January 25, 1894, in *MECW*, vol. 50, *Engels: 1892–1895* (New York: International Publishers, 2004), 265.]

³² Vladimir Ilyich Lenin, “Kritische Bemerkungen zur nationalen Frage [1913],” in *Über Kultur und Kunst*, 209. [English translation from Vladimir Ilyich Lenin, “Critical Remarks on the National Question,” in *Collected Works*, vol. 20, *December 1913–August 1914* (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1964), 24.]

historical knowledge about the origins and reasons behind a picture is by no means necessary to recognize its beauty or be emotionally moved by it. But they know that the spontaneous enjoyment of art can be heightened by both the cultivation of aesthetic sensibility and art historical knowledge. This knowledge not only satisfies a legitimate curiosity about the past but also fulfills the need for historical self-awareness. Yet, at the same time, it provides insights into the *modus operandi* of social-cultural relations and processes; in so doing, it helps our understanding of the laws, which, *mutatis mutandis*, apply to the present and the future and which must be used in the conscious implementation [*Vollzug*] of cultural development in order to plan and lead the cultural revolution.

The work of art or the personality of the artist is certainly not a simple and straightforward outcome of preexisting factors. But we are dissatisfied with attributing things too quickly to chance or an eternally unfathomable mystery. We want to recognize and explain in a rational manner as much as possible; “rationalist” is not a dirty word to Marxists—on the contrary. We are still far from a satisfactory overview of the interactions of the various layers and factors between the state of the productive forces and the appearance of, for example, a particular painting; however, we can trace some filaments and nodes in this root system of artistic creation to their economic and social foundations. In fact, it does not make sense to ask about the conditions for a single work of art rather than those for an entire artistic movement, style, or era.

The state of the *productive forces* is particularly relevant for technical arts such as architecture, artisanal handicraft, industrial design, printmaking, and sculpture, which today can work with new materials and techniques, as well as painting, among other things. Technical changes in construction have consequences, for example, for artistic creations in architectural contexts and, indeed, formal consequences as well.³³ But the state of the productive forces also determines essential forms of cooperation and living among people by developing the main branches of production. A society largely characterized by agriculture consists, so to speak, of “other” people and fundamentally differs from one based on highly developed large-scale industry.³⁴ The experiences of people in production also belong to the productive forces, by which we here primarily refer to the field of material production, even though “productive,” creative forces and experiences are also in operation in intellectual and artistic practice.

All the above-mentioned circumstances impact people’s ideas, as well as the structure and basic forms of their thinking and feeling. Work experiences are manifested in aesthetic

³³ [On the unique scope and ideological stakes of “art on buildings” (*Kunst am Bau*) and “building-related” or “architecture-related” art (*baubezogene/architekturbezogene Kunst*) in the GDR, see: J. R. Jenkins, *Picturing Socialism: Public Art and Design in East Germany* (London: Bloomsbury, 2020), 5–8.]

³⁴ “From the specific form of material production arises in the first place a specific structure of society, in the second place a specific relation of men to nature. Their State system and their intellectual outlook is determined by both. Therefore also the kind of their intellectual production.” Karl Marx, “Theorien über den Mehrwert [1862/63],” in *Über Kunst und Literatur*, 54. [English translation from Karl Marx, “Economic Manuscript of 1861–1863,” in *MECW*, vol. 31, *Marx: 1861–1863* (New York: International Publishers, 1989), 182.]

notions and thus also in artistic designs—e.g., in relation to rhythm, statics, proportion, color, and other things, as well as in relation to pictorial themes. The development of the productive forces also determines the scale and intensity of interpersonal communication. Who today could deny, for example, the art historical relevance of not only the mass distribution of reproductions that make accessible the entire artistic heritage and the latest inventions to potentially every artist and every audience at any time, but also of the far, fast, and frequent travels of both viewers and works of art?

It is particularly important, however, that the developmental stage of the productive forces and the entire mode of production [*Produktionsform*] lead to certain *relations of production* that result in a corresponding class structure—in a societal structure and its particular forms of public life, of prevailing ideas, of morality, etc.³⁵ These conditions determine the social task of art as well as the basic features of its respective individual functions. They inform the artist's position in society, the relations between artist and audience, the general role of the individual, the weight of traditions, etc. The forms of art ownership, the existence and importance of patronage or the art trade, the dominant construction projects or thematic areas and iconological systems, and ethical and aesthetic value systems, among others, all connect the work of art to the society from which it grows and contribute significantly to its concrete appearance.

Of course, some or all of these relationships are also seen and examined by a number of non-Marxist art scholars [*Kunstwissenschaftler*]. Certainly, the question one must ask is, even if they subjectively reject Marxism, to what extent have such scholars been objectively influenced by the growing insights of Marxism over the last century? We should also recognize that the most recent objective social development, at least as it is relevant to art historical theory, has even stimulated certain scholarly tendencies in non- or anti-socialist contexts that somewhat parallel our own endeavors. It is beneficial for the development of *Kunstwissenschaft* as a whole that such studies are being carried out, and Marxist art scholars [*Kunstwissenschaftler*] respectively adopt the insights obtained from other perspectives, provided they agree with them.

However, the following is important to note. Marxism sees these issues as part of a relatively closed system and recognizes that art has its *essential roots* in social relations, not just in a cultural-historical background that can be disregarded. Many questions and observations in Marxist *Kunstwissenschaft* are shared with or adopted from other social sciences, especially general history, political economy, and philosophy. The features and character of a particular situation of social and economic development—for example, that of Italy at the time when Michelangelo's aesthetic views were taking shape—must usually be

³⁵ [As Legros, Hunderfund, and Shapiro have explained, Marx used “mode of production” in two distinct ways: in a narrower sense to refer solely to the economic base or structure, and in a broader sense encompassing the whole of society, including the economic structures and superstructures. According to their analysis, “Produktionsform” falls into this broader category and therefore should be translated as “entire mode of production” to reflect this wider conceptual scope. Dominique Legros, Donald Hunderfund, and Judith Shapiro, “Economic Base, Mode of Production, and Social Formation: A Discussion of Marx's Terminology,” *Dialectical Anthropology*, vol. 4, no. 3 (October 1979), 243–49.]

determined by historians and economic historians and adopted from their research findings. However, an art historian should also be a historian to such an extent that they can select, evaluate, and process the relevant knowledge and insights from historical publications; indeed, they should be able to carry out such research or assessments themselves where they are otherwise absent. They can also independently approach the general historical evidence through questions derived from art historical objects. Most importantly, Marxist art historians are aware that although the acquisition of knowledge about economic, social, and ideological contexts occurs, so to speak, in the preliminary stage [*Vorfeld*] of actual art historical knowledge, it is an indispensable and essential part of *Kunstwissenschaft* since it pertains to matters that are not external [but integral] to art. One cannot find the correct path into the heart of art historical and artistic facts without the illumination of this preliminary stage. *Kunstwissenschaft* without this preliminary stage is an incomplete *Kunstwissenschaft*. It yields only partial truths (or outright errors); it only partially grasps the work of art and the artistic process of creation.

The Marxist conception of art is opposed, for example, to that of André Malraux, who argued that the pure essence of the work of art only emerges when all so-called non-artistic purposes and references are stripped away from the work in the museum, and it is no longer a cult image, a ruler portrait, a tomb monument, a lectern, or a broadsheet, but only an art object.³⁶ Instead, this inevitable musealization should be seen as an amputation of the essential life relations [*Lebensbezüge*], an impoverishment of the work of art. Indeed, without the mutilations inflicted upon it by capitalist commodity production, artistic creation is fundamentally a socially useful activity linked to other creative areas, a “practical and mental appropriation of reality.”³⁷ Painting a portrait is not about imposing the burdensome, non-artistic task of portraiture onto the art of painting, only for it to be discarded again by viewing the result as merely a “head” or a “painting.” Instead, portraiture involves a specific aesthetic form of appropriation in its highest manifestation for the perception and appropriation of the model, namely, artistic design [*Gestaltung*], alongside which other forms of cognition (e.g., scientific) exist on equal terms but are not interchangeable.

Furthermore, Marxism does not limit the relations between the economic basis or social conditions and art history to undoubtedly important areas such as the sociology of patrons and artists or the role of the art trade. Its tasks are not fulfilled through *microsociology*, through ever finer differentiations in the study of the social structure of the guilds in Florence in the middle of the fifteenth century or the Amsterdam patriciate in the seventeenth century, though these investigations are indispensable and far from being carried out satisfactorily everywhere. Wider accounts of an *epoch's* dominant ideas and its behavioral and creative forms are equally important.

³⁶ André Malraux, *Psychologie der Kunst*, vol. 1, *Das imaginäre Museum*, vol. 2, *Die künstlerische Gestaltung*; Rowohlt's deutsche Enzyklopädie, vol. 39 and 60 (Reinbeck: Rowohlt, 1957–58, 1960–61). The correctness and fruitfulness of many of the findings of the former Marxist Malraux on the history of the notion of art are undisputed.

³⁷ Karl Marx, “Einleitung zur Kritik der politischen Ökonomie [1857],” in *Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels: Werke*, vol. 13 (Berlin: Dietz, 1961), 633. I abide by the understanding of others regarding Marx's statement, contrary to the considerations of Koch, *Marxismus und Ästhetik*, 287 f.

For example, Marx and Engels's observations about the essential characteristics of production under *capitalist conditions* are crucial to explaining many phenomena of nineteenth- and twentieth-century art. The increasingly extreme social division of labor, along with the private appropriation of socially manufactured products by capital, has led, in a way, to a pernicious specialization of labor—to the separation of the artist from other areas of life and work and also, for example, to the separation of the painter from the architect. It has also encouraged the exaltation of subjectivism, the arrogance of *l'art pour l'art* or—as has been rightly said—*l'art pour l'artiste*. In this way, it has contributed to the fact that nineteenth- and twentieth-century artists only ever saw artistic problems, even as they became increasingly dissatisfied with the state and position of art in society. These artists sought to change the existing conditions solely through artistic means, particularly form. They revolted only in their artistic field, not in tandem with the decisive social forces. As economists have said, even before Marx, the “subdivision” of humans through the division of labor stunts the individual.³⁸ The worker has no personal relationship to their product given their role in the production process, where, unlike the craftsman, they perform only part of the labor without ever seeing a whole product to completion as their own work [*Werk*]. This detachment is further exacerbated by the fact that the product does not belong to them but to the owner of the instruments of production, that is, the capitalist. Consequently, the worker loses the artistic sense [*Kunstsinn*] of the craftsman, leading to a decline in taste and the subsequent emergence and acceptance of kitsch, especially since the bourgeois also lacked a productive relationship to the objects and an appreciation for artisanal quality [*handwerk-licher Sinn für Solidität*].³⁹ Marx summarized the relation of the wage laborer to their work—with the latter being the species-life [*Gattungsleben*], that specifically human form of life—and all of its consequences under the concept of alienation, including self-alienation. This is, as Marx said, “at the same time, the relation to the sensuous external world, to the objects of nature, as an alien world inimically opposed to him.”⁴⁰ This process inevitably left its mark on the artist's relationship with the world [*Weltverhältnis*]. It also meant that under capitalist conditions, modern industry could not become a great, legitimate subject of art.⁴¹ The fact that the artist produces their art as a commodity for the market, namely, as an isolated producer, is also linked to relations of production under capitalism. Artists are subject to the laws of competition, which promote the development of always new, unique, entirely individual “commodities” and ever-more unusual artistic styles. These are only some of the aspects that led Marx to realize that “capitalist production is hostile to certain branches of intellectual production, for example, art

³⁸ Karl Marx, *Das Kapital* [1863], in *Über Kunst und Literatur*, 30 f.

³⁹ Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, *Die deutsche Ideologie* [1845], in *Über Kunst und Literatur*, 59.

⁴⁰ Karl Marx, “Ökonomisch-philosophische Manuskripte [1844],” in *Über Kunst und Literatur*, 33. See also: Koch, *Marxismus und Ästhetik*, 454 ff. [English translation from Karl Marx, “The Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts of 1844,” in *MECW*, vol. 3: *Marx and Engels: 1843–1844* (New York: International Publishers, 1975), 275.]

⁴¹ Koch, *Marxismus und Ästhetik*, 259.

and poetry.”⁴² Therefore, the more time passes, the more obvious it is that great art is only possible if it goes *against* capitalist conditions, against bourgeois society.⁴³ All this can be subsumed under the fact that capitalist production presupposes the existence of “free” wage laborers, as opposed to serfs [*Hörigen*] or guild journeymen [*Zunft-gesellen*], and thus compelled the liberation of the individual—with all of its positive and negative consequences. The abolition of feudal privileges in favor of free competition turns the whole of bourgeois society into a “war against one another of all individuals, who are no longer isolated from one another by anything but their individuality.”⁴⁴ “The abolition of feudal servitude,” says Engels, “has made ‘cash-payment the sole relation of human beings’... Man has ceased to be the slave of men and has become the slave of things... The disintegration of mankind into a mass of isolated, mutually repelling atoms...”⁴⁵

These and some other characteristics of the [capitalist] conditions provide a more objective key to explaining the main peculiarities of artistic development in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries—its striking difference from all earlier epochs—than the many other attempts at interpretation that remain confined to the field of art or ideas, regretting the loss of a center, attributing the “domination of things over people” to technology, or holding the proletariat responsible for the “massification” and the decline of ordinary taste. The Marxist analysis of [capitalist] conditions uncovers tendencies of formal development—such as the pursuit of purity of means or the disintegration of forms—through the basic law of individuation in bourgeois art that is based on the relations of production. It has already supplied the keys even before these extreme [artistic] phenomena as “critical forms” (according to Sedlmayr) have made the essence of the relations fully visible!⁴⁶

It is necessary to mention another consequence of materialism for *Kunstwissenschaft*: the conviction that *content* also holds primacy in artistic development and the consideration of content in evaluating the quality of a work of art. Of course, this question cannot be fully addressed without factoring in the complicated problems of the dialectic of content and form. For the sake of brevity, only the following can be said. The content of an artwork is not tantamount to its theme or subject, as important as this representational aspect of the artwork

⁴² Marx, “Theorien über den Mehrwert,” 54. [English translation from Marx, “Economic Manuscript of 1861–1863,” 182.]

⁴³ This objective historical fact has also profoundly affected the theory of art and the self-image of artists in late capitalist society. In fact, many consider this tragic situation to be an eternal condition of artistic creation and the harmony of the artist with society (as possible under socialism/communism!) to be impossible or a forced castration of art. Here, too, social being determines consciousness.

⁴⁴ Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, “Die heilige Familie [1844],” in *Über Kunst und Literatur*, 58. [English translation from Karl Marx, “The Holy Family, or Critique of Critical Criticism,” in *MECW*, vol. 4, *Marx and Engels: 1844–1845* (New York: International Publishers, 1974), 116.]

⁴⁵ Friedrich Engels, “Die Lage Englands. Das 18. Jahrhundert [1844],” in *Über Kunst und Literatur*, 58. [English translation from Friedrich Engels, “The Condition of England. I. The Eighteenth Century,” in *MECW*, vol. 3, 476. Here, Engels is quoting Thomas Carlyle.]

⁴⁶ Hans Sedlmayr, *Verlust der Mitte* (Salzburg: O. Müller, 1948).

is. Rather, the content is the meaning that the artist imparts to their theme by means of the design—it is the statement the artist wants to make about the subject, and it can only reach the viewer in the guise of a sensually perceptible form. This intention to interpret the world—which artists sometimes are not fully aware of and cannot formulate outside of their art—determines their preferred forms of artistic expression and encourages them to seek out new, more suitable ones. These forms should realize the artist’s specific relationship to the world, which depends on the artist’s position in a historically concrete social situation and their attitude towards it. Renaissance artists studied antique works of art because they could help give shape to their new ideas. Impressionist artists lived in a world that was shifting, variously determined, individualized, atomized, and subjected to completely new conditions of speed, technology, urban life, and mass society. Thus, they were compelled to reflect these conditions by developing a more mobile, looser, more personal painting style based on the changing appearance of nature.

The significance of content entails its evaluation based on ethical criteria and truthfulness. This leads us to ask what a work of art accomplishes in revealing new sides and aspects of objective reality, especially the richness of the human psyche, interpersonal relationships, and the relationship of humans with nature. We assess the work of art in terms of its contribution to advancing humanity. Although the content is bound to its appearance in form, the number or concentration of formal elements and innovations alone thus cannot be the decisive benchmark of quality, as has been suggested by Max Bense, driven as he is by the idiosyncrasies of non-objective art.⁴⁷ We must come back to this question in connection with the problem of progress, which is a problem of dialectics.

Dialectics in Art History

“Dialectics is... the science of the general laws of motion and development of nature, human society, and thought.”⁴⁸ In its materialistic form, as established by Marx and Engels, it shows that nature and society—and thus art history and the artistic creative process—evolve, take place, and change dialectically; human thought must grasp this dialectic and also proceed dialectically itself if it is to properly reflect objective reality, that is, arrive at true assertions. The laws of dialectics, which are based on Hegel and expounded above all by Engels in the “Anti-Dühring” (1876/78) and by Lenin in his notes “On the Question of Dialectics” (1915 or 1916), essentially comprise the following: First, the reciprocal connection of all phenomena, that is, the relations of cause and effect, the general and particular, necessity and chance, possibility and reality.⁴⁹ Second, the permanent movement and development in all areas of

⁴⁷ Max Bense, “Die wissenschaftlichen Grundlagen einer möglichen Kunstkritik,” in *Kunstwissenschaft oder Propaganda? Funktionen der Kunstkritik* (Baden-Baden and Krefeld: Agis-Verlag, 1961), 32–46. Cf. Günther K. Lehmann, “Zu einigen informationstheoretischen Aspekten in der Ästhetik,” *Deutsche Zeitschrift für Philosophie*, vol. 13, no. 10/11 (1965), 1227–44.

⁴⁸ Friedrich Engels, *Anti-Dühring* [1876–78] (Berlin: 1952), 173. [English translation from Friedrich Engels, “Anti-Dühring,” in *MECW*, vol. 25, *Engels* (New York: International Publishers, 1987), 131.]

⁴⁹ Vladimir Ilyich Lenin, *Aus dem philosophischen Nachlaß* (Berlin: Dietz, 1954), 285–89.

reality and consciousness as opposed to the metaphysical assertion of eternal constants. Third, the manifestation of this development in such a way that, at a certain point, quantitative changes turn into a new quality, meaning that development essentially takes place in leaps and bounds. Fourth, dialectics shows that development is spurred by the emergence and overcoming of internal contradictions in things and contexts so that one can speak of the law of the negation of the negation; and fifth, that the unity and struggle of opposites—the self-contradictory and dynamic *coincidentia oppositorum* (for example, of the relative and the absolute)—is in effect and must be considered.

Consideration of objective dialectics—especially of the mutual relationship and the reciprocal dependency of phenomena—particularly complicates the acquisition of art historical knowledge, the passing of judgments, and the systematization of methods and knowledge. These different aspects can never be neatly separated from each other. But dialectics requires above all the consideration of historical developments and circumstances. The truth is always concrete.

Dialectics helps aesthetic philosophy clarify the relations between the objective and the subjective in aesthetic attitudes toward reality, including artistic creation. It also enables art historians to understand the relations between an individual artwork or an individual artist and *style*—be it the style of a group, a class, an epoch, a tribe [*Stamm*], or a nation—as a dialectical relationship between the particular and the general:

The individual exists only in the connection that leads to the universal. The universal exists only in the individual and through the individual. Every individual is (in one way or another) a universal. Every universal is (a fragment, an aspect, or the essence of) an individual. Every universal only approximately embraces all the individual objects. Every individual enters incompletely into the universal, etc., etc. Every individual is connected by thousands of transitions with other kinds of individuals (things, phenomena, processes), etc.⁵⁰

To understand what is being implied here, replace the “individual” with the paintings of Rubens or the painter Rubens, van Dyck, Jordaens, and the “universal” with Baroque or Flemish art.

One of Lenin’s formulations related to social and political history is also conducive to understanding period style: “Only a knowledge of the basic features of a given epoch can serve as the foundation for an understanding of the specific features of one country or another.”⁵¹

⁵⁰ Lenin, *Aus dem philosophischen Nachlaß*, 287. [English translation from Vladimir Ilyich Lenin, “On the Question of Dialectics,” in *Collected Works*, vol. 38, *Philosophical Notebooks* (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1976), 359.]

⁵¹ Vladimir Ilyich Lenin, “Unter fremder Flagge [1915–17],” in *Werke*, vol. 21 (Berlin: Dietz, 1960). This quote has been used in another context for *Kunstwissenschaft*. Koch, *Marxismus und Ästhetik*, 130. I cannot discuss further the currently very controversial concept of style here. [English translation from Vladimir Ilyich Lenin, “Under a False Flag,” in *Collected Works*, vol. 21, *August 1914–December 1915* (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1974), 145.]

Stylistic development can usually also be understood as a dialectical process. There have been some discussions, for example, about the emergence of Gothic architecture and architectural sculpture. Preliminary stages of individual characteristics of the Gothic have been found in various artistic landscapes of France. Individual, quantitative advances have been made here—but they cannot yet be called the Gothic. However, in a short period of time and within a limited territory, they coalesce into something different and new due to recent economic and social progress in that area; a dialectical transformation of isolated quantitative gains into a new quality takes place—a true leap in development. Such an approach protects the researcher from misinterpretations of the preliminary stages, from erroneous absolutizations of individual elements, and thus from false periodizations in art history. With this, the dialectical features of art history—not to mention those of the artistic creative process—are not fully exhausted. However, only one more question will be addressed—that of art historical *progress*. Since Alois Riegl, the idea of progress has been discredited, even though Riegl himself describes late antique art as progressing from classical art and merely states that there is no decline or regression in art.⁵² But his scholarly position that every art should be measured by its own standards, which became so fruitful for the exploration of many previously disdained periods and provinces of world art, has inevitably led to the view that all art is equal and therefore no progress can be discerned. In fact, the question of whether Goya is a better painter than Raphael because he lived later seems absurd to us—although there are vulgar materialists and sectarian would-be Marxists who believe a work of socialist realism is inherently better than anything older. But this problem cannot be solved with the notion of “better or worse.” It is true that the history of mankind and its culture undergoes an overall progressive, ascending development [*Entwicklung*]. Given the growing mastery of nature through the unfolding [*Entfaltung*] of the productive forces, it thus provides an increasing percentage of people with ever greater freedom for the development [*Entfaltung*] of their personality. Through this process, the knowledge of man and the world—gained and expressed through art—grows ever more varied and deeper. More and more areas of nature and the soul become available for ever more truthful representation. That is objective progress. It does not proceed straightforwardly and without setbacks; indeed, it always comes at a particular cost.⁵³ Moreover, there are periods in which experiences in production, as much as artistic experiences and skills, are actually lost, or relations of production become restrictive, and society degenerates.⁵⁴ Generally, their art then also becomes superficial,

⁵² Alois Riegl, *Spätromische Kunstindustrie* (Vienna: Österreichische Staatsdruckerei, 1901, 1927), esp. 11, 18.

⁵³ Cf. A. W. Gulyga, “Gibt es in der Kunst einen Fortschritt?” *Kunst und Literatur*, vol. 12, no. 10 (1964), 1001–11.

⁵⁴ [The term “degeneration” (*Degenerierung*)—synonymous with the more infamous *Entartung*—is rooted in deeply racist and *völkisch* discourses that linked mannerist, modern, outsider, and non-European art to physical and mental disabilities, as well as criminal delinquency. For an overview of the term’s history, see: Jens Malte Fischer, “‘Entartete Kunst’: Zur Geschichte eines Begriffes,” *Merkur*, vol. 38, no. 4 (1984), 346–52; Olaf Peters, “From Nordau to Hitler: ‘Degeneration’ and Anti-Modernism between the Fin-de-Siècle and the National Socialist Takeover of Power,” in Olaf Peters, ed., *Degenerate Art: The Attack on Modern Art in Nazi Germany, 1937* (Munich: Prestel, 2014), 16–

phony, or poorer. It becomes decadent and loses its human substance and value. With little to offer posterity, it decays. The occasional increase in purely formal appeal can only provide some consolation for this situation. Although we do not want to admit it to ourselves in theory, we do judge this way in practice. Even those who appreciate the intellectually stimulating inventions of Italian Mannerism cannot place Bronzino above Leonardo or even on the same level as him.⁵⁵

On the Methodology of Marxist *Kunstwissenschaft*

At some point in the preceding considerations, it was necessary to comment on the methodology of dialectical materialist *Kunstwissenschaft*. Therefore, I can now limit myself to a brief summary—all the more so since there is still no systematically developed methodology, and many questions have only recently emerged or been properly understood.

Fundamentally, we are interested in exploiting the full wealth of insights and methods inherited from non-Marxist *Kunstwissenschaft*, which, unfortunately, has not been sufficiently practiced so far. Our relationship to dialectics demands from us the utmost complexity of knowledge. We have and want to answer many “Why?” questions, even if this cannot be fully accomplished in every single study. The value of the dialectical-materialist interpretation is that it does not want to fall behind any previously given [interpretation] or disregard any knowledge gained so far. Instead, it wants to go beyond them and dig deeper into the causes of artistic phenomena. When properly executed, it can indeed achieve this. All previous principal methods of *Kunstwissenschaft* have contributed to the knowledge of art and possess a rational core that must be preserved. They have illuminated and discerned certain aspects of the infinite totality of the artwork or the multifaceted creative process. Our only criticism is that, in some cases, they have made these aspects absolute or falsely elevated them to a decisive status. Nobody can or wants to pass over the insights into the character of the formal language of Alois Riegl, August Schmarsow, Heinrich Wölfflin, Paul Frankl, Theodor Hetzer,

35. Sedlmayr was instrumental in popularizing this rhetoric among right-wing audiences. See: Sedlmayr, *Art in Crisis*, 141–44. Despite rejecting “biologism” in favor of social processes earlier in the text, Feist here appears to adopt a Darwinist model of stylistic change to affirm the superiority of realism over abstraction. While support for artists defamed as “degenerate” during the Third Reich was a cornerstone of the Allied denazification efforts, the same anti-modernist rhetoric was soon harnessed by Soviet and SED propaganda to stigmatize “elements hostile to the party” or, more specifically, abstract art’s “bourgeois” neglect of reality. The term gained notable attention after it appeared in the newspaper article that sparked the formalism debates. See: N. Orlow, “Über ‘Irrwege’ Moderner Kunst,” 20/21 January 1951, in Matthias Judt, ed., *DDR-Geschichte in Dokumenten: Beschlüsse, Berichte, Interne Materialien und Alltagszeugnisse* (Berlin: Bundeszentrale für Politische Bildung), K/M4, 317–18, here 318. For a broader contextualization, see: Gerd Dietrich, *Kulturgeschichte der DDR*, vol. 1, *Kultur in der Übergangsgesellschaft, 1945–1957*, 2nd ed. (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2019), 136–40, 399–409.]

⁵⁵ [On the historiographic framing of Mannerism as “degenerate,” see: Horst Bredekamp, “Der Manierismus: Zur Problematik einer Kunsthistorischen Erfindung,” in Wolfgang Braungart, ed., *Manier und Manierismus* (Tübingen: Max Niemeyer, 2000), 109–29.]

and others.⁵⁶ They taught us to look at the work of art, as did the great art connoisseurs Wilhelm von Bode, Adolph Goldschmidt, Max J. Friedländer, Albert Boeckler, Bernard Berenson, Ludwig Justi, Friedrich Winkler, and many others, as did such master interpreters of form like Wilhelm Worringer, Willy Kurth, and others.⁵⁷ We study with particular attention the works of those scholars who sought to correlate art with other areas of life, such as Anton Springer, Herman Grimm, Carl Justi, Georg Dehio, or Max Dvořák, Werner Weisbach, Louis Hautecœur, Charles de Tolnay, Hermann Beenken, and others.⁵⁸ Such thorough investigations into the external circumstances of artistic creation as those conducted by Martin Wackernagel, John Rewald, Norbert Lieb, and others are indispensable.⁵⁹ In particular, we

⁵⁶ Riegl, *Spätromische Kunstindustrie*; August Schmarsow, *Grundbegriffe der Kunstwissenschaft* (Leipzig and Berlin: B.G. Teubner, 1905); Heinrich Wölfflin, *Kunstgeschichtliche Grundbegriffe* (Munich: Bruckmann, 1915); Paul Frankl, *Die Entwicklungsphasen der neueren Baukunst* (Leipzig and Berlin: B.G. Teubner, 1914); Theodor Hetzer, *Tizian. Geschichte seiner Farbe* (Frankfurt am Main: V. Klostermann, 1935). Cf. Gerhard Strauss, "Heinrich Wölfflin. Über seine Bedingtheit und seine Bedeutung," in *Forschen und Wirken. Festschrift zur 150-Jahr-Feier der Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin*, vol. 1 (Berlin: VEB Deutscher Verlag der Wissenschaften, 1960), 417–51; Ernst Ullmann, "August Schmarsow," in Max Steinmetz, ed., *Bedeutende Gelehrte in Leipzig*, vol. 1 (Leipzig: Karl-Marx-Universität, 1965), 109–15.

⁵⁷ Wilhelm von Bode, *Die Meister der holländischen und flämischen Malerschulen* (Leipzig: E. A. Seemann, 1917); Adolph Goldschmidt, *Die Elfenbeinskulpturen aus der Zeit der karolingischen und sächsischen Kaiser, 8.-11. Jh.* (Berlin: B. Cassirer, 1914–18); *ibid.*, *Die Elfenbeinskulpturen der romanischen Zeit, 11.-13. Jh.* (Berlin: B. Cassirer, 1923); Max J. Friedländer, *Die Altniederländische Malerei* (Berlin and Leiden: A.W. Sijthof, 1914–28, 1937); Albert Boeckler, *Abendländische Miniaturen bis zum Ausgang der romanischen Zeit* (Berlin and Leipzig: Walter de Gruyter, 1930); Bernard Berenson, *Die italienischen Maler der Renaissance* [multiple editions since 1887] (Zurich: Phaidon, 1952); Ludwig Justi, *Giorgione* (Berlin: J. Bard, 1908); *ibid.*, *Ausstellung in der Nationalgalerie* (Berlin: Das Neue Berlin Verlag, 1950); Friedrich Winkler, *Altdeutsche Tafelmalerei* (Munich: Bruckmann, 1941). Cf. Gerhard Strauss, "Adolph Goldschmidt – zur 100. Wiederkehr seines Geburtstages," *Wissenschaftliche Zeitschrift der Humboldt-Universität Berlin. Gesellschafts- und sprachwissenschaftliche Reihe*, vol. 12, no. 6 (1963), 737–41; Wilhelm Worringer, *Griechentum und Gotik* (Munich: R. Piper, 1928); Willy Kurth, *Deutsche Maler im 19. Jahrhundert* (Berlin: Die Buchgemeinde, 1926).

⁵⁸ Anton Springer, *Grundzüge* (later *Handbuch*) *der Kunstgeschichte* (Leipzig: A. Kröner, 1879, and many other editions); Herman Grimm, *Leben Michelangelos* (Hannover: Rümpler, 1860); Carl Justi, *Diego Velazquez und sein Jahrhundert* (Bonn: M. Cohen, 1888); Georg Dehio, *Geschichte der deutschen Kunst* (Berlin and Leipzig: Walter de Gruyter, 1919–26); Max Dvořák, *Kunstgeschichte als Geistesgeschichte* (Munich: R. Piper, 1924); Werner Weisbach, *Das Barock als Kunst der Gegenreformation* (Berlin: P. Cassirer, 1921); Louis Hautecœur, *Littérature et peinture en France du XVIIe au XXe siècle* (Paris: A. Colin, 1942); Charles de Tolnay, *Werk und Weltbild des Michelangelo* (Zurich: Rhein-Verlag, 1949); Hermann Beenken, *Das neunzehnte Jahrhundert in der deutschen Kunst* (Munich: Bruckmann, 1944).

⁵⁹ Martin Wackernagel, *Der Lebensraum des Künstlers in der florentinischen Renaissance* (Leipzig: E. A. Seemann, 1938); John Rewald, *Geschichte des Impressionismus* (Zurich and Stuttgart: Rascher Verlag, 1957); *ibid.*, *Von van Gogh zu Gauguin. Die Meister des Nachimpressionismus* (Munich,

find much common ground with the sociological inquiries of Richard Hamann, Arnold Hauser, Lionello Venturi, Gregor Paulsson, Nikolaus Pevsner, Helen Rosenau, Pierre Francastel, Mohammed Rassem, and others.⁶⁰ I consider iconology, as developed by Aby Warburg, Erwin Panofsky, Günter Bandmann, Werner Hofmann, Jaromir Neumann, Jan Bialostocki, and others, to be a decisively important method and view structural analysis, as employed by Willi Drost, Friedrich Matz, Hans Sedlmayr, among others, as a fundamental means of mastering the dialectic of content and form.⁶¹ Scholars who study art history by applying Marxist insights regarding the historical function of art and the historical role of class movements are particularly instructive for us—for example, Frederick Antal, Francis D. Klingender, Konrad Farnet, Ernst Fischer, or the Soviet art historians Boris R. Wipper, Mikhail V. Alpatov, Viktor N. Lasarev, A.D. Chegodayev, Yuri D. Kolpinsky, Mikhail J. Liebmann, and others.⁶² This list of important scholars for the development of

Vienna, Basel: Desch, 1957); Norbert Lieb, *Die Fugger und die Kunst* (Munich: Schnell & Steiner, 1952–58).

⁶⁰ Richard Hamann and Jost Hermand, *Naturalismus* (Berlin: Akademie-Verlag, 1959); *ibid.*, *Impressionismus* (Berlin: Akademie-Verlag, 1960); Arnold Hauser, *Sozialgeschichte der Kunst und Literatur* (Munich: C. H. Beck, 1953); Lionello Venturi, *Les Archives de l'impressionnisme* [Introduction] (Paris and New York: Durand Ruel, 1939); Gregor Paulsson, *Die soziale Dimension der Kunst* (Basel: Francke, 1955); Nikolaus Pevsner, *Die italienische Malerei vom Ende der Renaissance bis zum ausgehenden Rokoko*, Handbuch der Kunstwissenschaft (Potsdam: Akademische Verlagsgesellschaft Athenaion, 1928); Helen Rosenau, *J. L. David* (London: Nicholson & Watson, 1948); Pierre Francastel, *Peinture et société* (Lyon: Audin, 1951); Mohammed Rassem, *Gesellschaft und bildende Kunst* (Berlin [West]: Walter de Gruyter, 1960).

⁶¹ Aby Warburg, *Gesammelte Schriften* (Leipzig and Berlin: B. G. Teubner, 1939); Erwin Panofsky, *Studies in Iconology* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1939); *ibid.*, *Meaning in the Visual Arts* (Garden City, NJ: Doubleday & Company, 1957); *ibid.*, *Aufsätze zu Grundfragen der Kunstwissenschaft* (Berlin [West]: B. Hessling, 1964); Günter Bandmann, *Mittelalterliche Architektur als Bedeutungsträger* (Berlin [West]: G. Mann, 1951); Werner Hofmann, *Das irdische Paradies. Kunst im neunzehnten Jahrhundert* (Munich: Prestel, 1960); Jaromir Neumann, "G. B. Pittoni, La Remise de clefs à Saint Pierre," in *Omagiu lui George Oprescu* (Bucharest: Editura Academiei Republicii Populare Romîne, 1961); Jan Bialostocki, "Iconography and Iconology," in *World Encyclopedia of Art*, vol. 7 (New York, Toronto, London: McGraw Hill, 1963), col. 769–85; Willi Drost, "Form als Symbol," *Zeitschrift für Ästhetik und allgemeine Kunstwissenschaft* 21 (1927), 358–71; Friedrich Matz, *Geschichte der griechischen Kunst*, vol. 1 (Frankfurt am Main: V. Klostermann, 1950); Hans Sedlmayr, *Kunst und Wahrheit. Zur Theorie und Methode der Kunstgeschichte*, Rowohlts deutsche Enzyklopädie, vol. 71 (Hamburg: Rowohlt, 1958). The one-sidedness in the handling of structural analysis should not be overlooked, nor should the fundamental difference between Sedlmayr's position and the Marxist one and his unacceptable interpretation of recent art history. Cf. Heinz Quitzsch, *Verlust der Kunstwissenschaft?* (Leipzig: E. A. Seemann, 1963).

⁶² Frederick Antal, "Remarks on the Method of Art History," *Burlington Magazine* 91 (1949), 49–52, 73–75; *ibid.*, *Die florentinische Malerei und ihr sozialer Hintergrund* (Berlin: Henschelverlag, 1958); Francis D. Klingender, *Art and the Industrial Revolution* (London: N. Carrington, 1947); *ibid.*, *Goya und die demokratische Tradition Spaniens* (Berlin: Henschelverlag, 1954); Konrad Farnet, *Gustave Doré, der industrialisierte Romantiker* (Dresden: Verlag der Kunst, 1963); Ernst Fischer, *Von der*

Kunstwissenschaft is not exhaustive and only points to some whom I find particularly noteworthy. It also emphasizes that the advancement of *Kunstwissenschaft*, as pursued with initial success by a number of younger Marxist art historians in the GDR, requires the full exploitation of previous knowledge as well as the collegial cooperation with many bourgeois-humanist-minded colleagues in the GDR, in the Federal Republic of Germany, and abroad.⁶³

Notwendigkeit der Kunst, Fundus Bücher, vol. 1 (Dresden: Verlag der Kunst, 1959); Boris R. Wipper, *Bor'ba techeniy v ital'yanskom iskusstve XVI veka* (Moscow: Izd-vo AN SSSR, 1956); Michael W. Alpatov, *Geschichte der Kunst* (Dresden: Verlag der Kunst, 1961–64); *ibid.*, “Die Sixtinische Madonna von Raffael,” *Kunst und Literatur*, vol. 3, no. 7 (1955), 692–710; Viktor N. Lazarew, *Istoriya vizantiyskoy zhivopisi* (Moscow: Iskusstvo, 1947/1948); Die Akademie der Künste der UdSSR, eds., *Allgemeine Geschichte der Kunst*; Jurij D. Kolpinski, “Das Schicksal der Kunst im 19. Jahrhundert,” *Kunst und Literatur*, vol. 12, no. 6 (1964), 652–62; Mikhail J. Liebmann, *Iskusstvo Germanii: XVI i XVII vekov* (Moscow: Iskusstvo, 1964); *ibid.*, “Zum Problem der Stilentwicklung in der deutschen Kunst des 15. und 16. Jahrhunderts,” *Kunst und Literatur*, vol. 12, no. 11 (1964), 1215–24.

⁶³ The following is a short selection of works that are mostly of methodological interest, arranged in chronological order: Kurt Junghanns, *Die deutsche Stadt im Frühfeudalismus* (Berlin: Henschelverlag, 1959); Wolfgang Hütt, *Wir und die Kunst* (Berlin: Henschelverlag, 1959, 1964); Ursula Grabow (later Ursula Feist), “Ein großer Sohn des spanischen Volkes. Zum 300. Todestag von Diego Velazquez,” *Bildende Kunst* 9 (1960), 581–88; Friedrich Möbius, “Außenbaumotive der Jenaer Stadtkirche. Versuch einer geschichtlichen Deutung,” *Wissenschaftliche Zeitschrift der Friedrich-Schiller-Universität Jena. Gesellschafts- und sprachwissenschaftliche Reihe*, vol. 10, no. 2/3 (1960/61), 339–74; Peter H. Feist, “Motivkunde als kunstgeschichtliche Untersuchungsmethode,” *Wissenschaftliche Zeitschrift der Humboldt-Universität Berlin. Gesellschafts- und sprachwissenschaftliche Reihe*, vol. 10, no. 2/3 (1961), 257–70; Ule Lammert, *Architektur und Plastik. Ein Beitrag zu ihrer Synthese* (Berlin: Henschelverlag, 1962); Gerhard Strauss, “Siedlungs- und Architekturkonzeptionen der Utopisten. Zur Problematik und zu einigen Einzelprojekten,” *Wissenschaftliche Zeitschrift der Humboldt-Universität Berlin. Gesellschafts- und sprachwissenschaftliche Reihe*, vol. 11, no. 4 (1962), 543–99; Ullrich Kuhirt, “Das Werden des sozialistischen Realismus in der deutschen bildenden Kunst,” *Wissenschaftliche Zeitschrift der Humboldt-Universität Berlin. Gesellschafts- und sprachwissenschaftliche Reihe*, vol. 11, no. 2 (1962), 165–92; Heinz Lüdecke, “Dürer und Italien,” in *Dezennium*, vol. 1 (Dresden: Verlag der Kunst, 1962), 284–304; Diether Schmidt, “Krieg und Frieden. Bekenntnisse zum Humanismus in Wandbildern von Pablo Picasso und Otto Dix,” in *Dezennium*, vol. 1 (Dresden: Verlag der Kunst, 1962), 234–50; Ernst Ullmann, “Zum Problem des Stilwandels von der Romanik zur Gotik in Frankreich,” *Wissenschaftliche Zeitschrift der Karl-Marx-Universität Leipzig. Gesellschafts- und sprachwissenschaftliche Reihe*, vol. 12, no. 2 (1963), 463–71; Harald Olbrich, “Einige Seiten im Verhältnis von Kunstwissenschaft und Philosophie in der deutschen bürgerlichen Kunstwissenschaft des 20. Jahrhunderts,” *Wissenschaftliche Zeitschrift der Karl-Marx-Universität Leipzig. Gesellschafts- und sprachwissenschaftliche Reihe*, vol. 12, no. 2 (1963), 293–99; Günter Feist, “Zur Methodik der Kollwitz-Forschung,” in Gerhard Strauss, ed., *Anschaung und Deutung. Willy Kurth zum 80. Geburtstag* (Berlin: Akademie-Verlag, 1964), 85–99; Wolfgang Hütt, *Die Düsseldorfer Malerschule 1819–1869* (Leipzig: E. A. Seemann, 1964); Günter Meißner, “Zum Traditionsproblem in der bildenden Kunst der Deutschen Demokratischen Republik,” *Wissenschaftliche Zeitschrift der Karl-Marx-Universität Leipzig. Gesellschafts- und sprachwissenschaftliche Reihe*, vol. 13, no. 5 (1964), 907–31.

This is necessary even if we differ—more with some and less with others—in perspectives, methods, and individual aims, while a discussion of the principal disagreements is indispensable.

Marxist art scholars [*Kunstwissenschaftler*] recognize the last instance of a style or a work of art's particularity [*So-und-nicht-anders-Sein*] in the artist's position and the work's function within a specific, concrete situation of social existence, which is, in turn, regulated by economically based class antagonism. They investigate the characteristics and traits of this situation and establish the relations between them and the characteristics of the work of art. This includes determining which features are unique and representative of this particular situation, what they reveal, and in which way. In doing so, the unity of theme, form, and content is always maintained. The history of *themes* and *motifs* must be pursued in close connection with the *history of form*. I also believe that the evaluation of "critical forms," which, as extremes, illustrate the tendency of a given development, must be combined with careful attention to the norm through the aid of statistical methods.

Finally, in order to benefit as many people as possible and thus society as a whole, Marxist *Kunstwissenschaft* looks for the best methods to thoroughly uncover the aesthetic values of each work of art, the special achievement of each artist, and their irreplaceable contribution to the development of world culture, while also making these methods accessible and tangible to *as many people as possible*. We are particularly mindful of those who were cut off from art for a long time because they lacked bourgeois educational privileges. This guides our journalism, our museum and exhibition work, our lecture activities, art education in the schools, and, consequently, the curriculum at the art historical institutes.

The problems of *Kunstwissenschaft* can only be solved by using the findings of other disciplines or by working in tandem with them. History, including economic and social history and political economy, the history of the other arts, philosophy, and religion, as well as aesthetic philosophy, and the specialized theory of literature, film, music, etc., are paramount. Of ever greater importance today is *sociology*, as it more precisely determines the operations of social bodies, the emergence of value systems, behavioral motivations, etc., both in the present and in any historical context.⁶⁴ However, unless *psychology* and its physiological foundations are thoroughly consulted and explicitly developed to address our particular questions, we cannot precisely grasp these [social] operations, the laws according to which an experience is transformed into artistic design, or those that determine the effect of an artwork's theme or combination of forms and colors on the viewer.⁶⁵ We art historians forge ahead along these paths to make our contribution to the development of a universally educated socialist nation.

⁶⁴ Heinz Plavius, "Gedanken zum Gegenstand und zur Methode der marxistischen Kulturgeschichte," *Deutsche Zeitschrift für Philosophie*, vol. 13, no. 7 (1965), 875–89; Günther K. Lehmann, "Grundfragen einer marxistischen Soziologie der Kunst," *Deutsche Zeitschrift für Philosophie*, vol. 13, no. 8 (1965), 933–47.

⁶⁵ See also: Aleksandr Kondratow, "Semiotik und Kunsttheorie," *Kunst und Literatur*, vol. 12, no. 5 (1964), 519–30; Harry Bober, "Die Rolle des Affektiv-Emotionalen im Erkenntnisprozeß," *Deutsche Zeitschrift für Philosophie*, vol. 13, no. 8 (1965), 948–66; Ludwig Küttner, "Literatur, Kunst und Kybernetik," *Kunst und Literatur*, vol. 13, no. 12 (1965), 1239–58.