## Moriz Thausing and the road towards objectivity in the history of art

## Karl Johns

As the sixth child of the family, born June 3, 1838 to the 'herrschaftlicher Amtsdirector' Julius Thausing, Moriz Thausing received his earliest instruction privately in the castle of Tschischkowitz (Cížkovice) near Leitmeritz (the present day Litoměřice in Bohemia), and later in Lobositz (the present day Lovosice) in the house of his grandmother, from an uncle who was a priest. His secondary education took place at the Gymnasium in Brüx (present day Most). Upon arriving in Prague in 1856 and Vienna in 1858, he studied history, ultimately becoming a member in 1859 of the Institut für Österreichische Geschichtsforschung within the University of Vienna. The journal of that body, the *Mitteilungen des Instituts für Österreichische Geschichtsforschung*, was later to be founded at his personal behest. His article of 1861 about the Nibelungs, had been accepted at the University of Tübingen as a doctorial dissertation. In the mean time, he had also resided in Munich, where he attended lectures, and had contact with Heinrich von Sybel.

According to Theodor Frimmel, he retained an attraction to Romanticism as an influence from the maternal side of his family. His interest in the history of art seems to have been awakened by the lectures of Rudolf von Eitelberger in Vienna, who also became a model in basing his teaching on concrete examples. The local collections in Vienna thus became one of the reasons for the peculiar efflorescence of the history of art there. Its strengths in the manuscript collections and the Albertina would later reveal themselves in the publications of his own students and the following generations.

In 1862, after teaching briefly at a Real-Schule in Vienna, Thausing was appointed librarian at the Akademie der bildenden Künste, where he then taught world history and cultural history between 1865 and 1868. In 1864, he had been appointed 'Official' at the Albertina, later 'Inspector,' and finally its director in 1876 (according to Engelbert Mühlbacher already in 1868) – possibly in acknowledgment of his pioneering study of Albrecht Dürer. The provisional list of his publications (as appended below) can give an idea of his activities for the rest of his life. This list will remain quite fragmentary until the newspaper publications of those years become better known - since much of the academic discussions took place in their feuilleton sections, usually those of the more elevated newspapers, sometimes weeklies, while academic journals in the humanities were only then being slowly founded. Once this information becomes more available, it should be possible to trace some of the polemics in which Thausing became involved. Those who knew him recalled that he

had an emotional side, and it was in face of an incurable illness that he took his own life in the Elbe, after returning to his native region - Aussig (the present Ústi nad Labem) - in 1884.

When the chair in the history of art at the University of Vienna was founded in 1873 (as distinct from the teaching of the subject that had already been taking place in the Institut für Österreichische Geschichtsforschung), Thausing was appointed to this, and promoted to the rank of Ordinarius in 1879. His inaugural lecture 'The status of the history of art as an academic discipline' ('Die Stellung der Kunstgeschichte als Wissenschaft') was held in 1873, and then published in the Österreichische Rundschau in May of 1883. This strikes us as worth making known to a wider audience for the glimpse it allows into the history of art as an academic subject at a comparatively early date.

He endorsed the publications and approach of Giovanni Morelli, but himself might be better remembered in distinguishing copies and imitations from original graphic art, particularly from the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. His publication of the written sources surrounding Albrecht Dürer perpetuates the tradition of the series of source publications founded by Rudolf Eitelberger and Albert Ilg, while his biography of the artist is further based on such critical sifting of evidence. In his lecture, he has pitted himself against certain romantic excesses from publications about art that were typical of that time. At a moment, when Robert Zimmermann was regularly reviewing the relevant philosophical books in the *Zeitschrift für bildende Kunst*, Thausing distinguished historical research from aesthetic appraisals, and expressed himself against the application of abstract and unclearly defined concepts to peculiar historical cases. Some of his ideas anticipate the approach taken by Franz Wickhoff and Alois Riegl. When he states that 'the art of a nation is also a language,' one cannot help recalling Julius Schlosser or even the Norton Lectures by Leonard Bernstein.<sup>1</sup>

Other interesting aspects include his attention to neighboring subjects in a manner that would continue to flourish in Vienna more pervasively than seems to have been the case at German universities for instance. He considered the relation to aesthetics and to history, but as the author of a book about historical linguistics, was also aware of the questions being discussed in that and other disciplines.

In spite of the sketchy preservation of information, it is possible to distinguish certain characteristics about the succession of art historians at the university in the period of the fin-de-siècle. On the basis of the earlier teaching methods of Rudolf Eitelberger, a method based on the autopsy of original objects solidified already by the third quarter of the nineteenth century, and most of the university instructors had held curatorial posts at the museums and libraries, or continued to do so concurrently with their academic appointments. When the *Jahrbuch der Kunsthistorischen Sammlungen des Allerhöchsten Kaiserhauses* was founded, its essays also centered on individual monuments from the collections, and

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup> Leonard Bernstein, *The unanswered question : six talks at Harvard*, Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press 1976, The Charles Eliot Norton Lectures ; 1973.

distinguished themselves in this from the sister publication of the Berlin museums. Although the Viennese might have also had a closer connection to France and Italy than their German colleagues, the rivalry with Germany was certainly always in the back of their mind throughout the later nineteenth century. Indeed, during the decade after Thausing assumed this post, there was a wave of appointments of academics from Prussia to the university in Vienna.

Although each of the occupants of the chair seem to have expressed reservations about the personality and approach of their predecessor - in what might have been a local Viennese characteristic - there was nonetheless a broad agreement as to the goals of the discipline, and a relative unanimity which might seem remarkable today. This is perhaps clearest in the reviews contained in the Kunstgeschichtliche Anzeigen, which was published between 1904 and 1913 as a supplement to the Mitteilungen des Instituts für österreichische Geschichtsforschung. In the introductory preface to the first issue, Franz Wickhoff characterized the atmosphere in Vienna with the words: 'A group of art historians have graduated from this institute and remained in professional and personal contact with one another. However different their individual fields of activity might be, they share the intention of placing the history of art on a scientific footing along with the other historical disciplines.' After complaining of 'wordiness' and 'shallow misunderstanding,' as well as other shortcomings of many of the current publications, and further delineating the general intention to separate the 'serious publications from the others,' he confided that he had been entrusted with the task of editing these reviews simply because he was the oldest member of the group. Although the graduates and their aims became most tangible during the period in which Wickhoff taught, the sparser remains from the career of Thausing reveal that many of the same concerns had already been constituent aspects before Wickhoff received his degree. Even the tone of sarcasm and polemic persisted across the generations.

As many academics today lose sight of the meaning of the humanities, there is a greater reflection on the history of the individual disciplines. Although much has become obsolete from the discussions of those years, the final half of the 19th century produced many of the most enduring publications of primary sources, reference works as they still form the basis for research, but also some of the most far reaching theoretical distinctions. Both Alois Riegl and Julius Schlosser repeatedly identified themselves as having been largely animated by those discussions.

In retrospect, Moriz Thausing can be seen as one of the first to express a devotion to something like objective truth in historical research about art as it went beyond the individual oeuvre catalogues, and about old master prints and drawings in particular. Of course, he was living in the period of the unification of Germany and Italy, and was no more infallible than his followers in the chair. Although it remained for Franz Wickhoff, his pupil and successor there, to work out a more detailed program for training students and relevant bureaucrats in these subjects, as well as setting examples in the aforementioned book reviews, it should not be

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forgotten that Thausing had already set the course for what would become the tradition which in the future would for instance continue to attract a wide array of students to the program offered by Julius Schlosser in spite of the fact that this was far more demanding than that of Josef Strzygowski. It is in this context that the inaugural lecture by Thausing of 1873 deserves to be better known - in this case in a language that is more widely read.

## Moriz Thausing, The status of the history of art as an academic discipline

Translated and edited by Karl Johns<sup>2</sup>

Recognition of the history of art as an academic discipline and its justification to a place beside the other historical sciences is recent, and opinions surrounding its significance are still far from unanimous. Even in circles where one would expect a more sophisticated attitude, there are strange conceptions in this regard. For this reason, it seems appropriate to begin with an account of the scope, method and problems treated by art historical research. It appears most convenient to begin this indirectly, by first contemplating the limits of the history of art in relation to its neighboring disciplines, referring to classical archaeology, aesthetics and world history, both as they are distinct and common, and finally the question of the border separating the history of art from the practice of art, an aspect of the deep gulf that persists between theory and practice.

The history of modern art stands in an intimate relationship to classical archaeology, as its younger sister, treating the same subjects, simply from a later date. They share the double nature of their sources, their identity in their method and their ultimate goals. By the close relation of its subjects, the continuity of the forms – particularly in architecture - between one historical period and another, the two disciplines rely on one another. Ultimately, they represent two epochs within one and the same discipline, and are only held apart because the entire material would be overwhelming for a single person to master. Aside from these more internal common characteristics, there are as many external differences. For archaeology, the sources are completely different: the measured or at least assessable number of monuments, the application of method is different, and far more intensive. This is possible because it has classical philology to support it. In addition to this there is a strong public interest in this subject since the culture of the German language areas has traditionally seen itself as rooted in classical antiquity. For this reason, classical archaeology was established and practiced far earlier than the history of art of the more recent periods. This also accounts for the fact that it was granted a place and a voice in the republic of letters approximately two generations earlier.

Just as philology of the Germanic and Romance languages emulated that of the classical period, and modern history that of antiquity, so too does the history of

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>2</sup> Originally published as 'Die Stellung der Kunstgeschichte als Wissenschaft Aus einer Antrittsvorlesung an der Wiener Universität im Oktober 1873', in Österreichische Rundschau, May 1883, and reprinted in Moriz Thausing, Wiener Kunstbriefe, Leipzig: E. A. Seemann 1884, 1-20, and Wiener Jahrbuch für Kunstgeschichte, 36, 1983, 141-150.

art follow archaeology as a sister discipline of equal status. This has however only just begun to occur. The first generation of its teachers is still in place. One of its original founders, our great predecessor C. F. Schnaase, died only just in 1873 at an early age. Within such a short space of time, and in incomparably more difficult circumstances, this young discipline has shown respectable results, and this will probably be confirmed later, when it should be possible to look backward more even handedly. This in spite of the fact that it covers a period which, for the moment at least, seems almost limitless, the number of monuments overwhelming, and its written sources have not been made available by modern and literary historians - as are those of antiquity. This situation demands a careful treatment and a thorough application of method or the unity of the field might be compromised in an imbalance. The general interest which exists in the subject is often more of a nuisance than an advantage, and embroiled in practical questions involving the rancour and patronage of certain factions.

Occasionally the extra-scholarly applications of certain branches of the history of art have proven beneficial, such as the medieval period and ecclesiastical archaeology in particular, which has provided a sort of Romantic contrast to the study of ancient art. There was a time in which the question was left in abeyance as to whether the interest centered on the figure of the saint himself or his image, whether the reliquary was being studied because of the relics within it or the significance of the shrine. This provided a significant impulse for medieval archaeology, but not for its development into a scholarly discipline.

In other periods, particularly the Renaissance and those thereafter, a predominantly aesthetic approach has become current. This is characterized by the repetition of very general, largely undefined concepts, and a random canon of beauty, consciously or unconsciously derived from antiquity or at times from Raphael. This still very widespread mode of writing about art is comparable to previous phases of natural philosophy, and as it can be seen in the fields of legal history or natural science for instance. This is usually the practice of artists or authors with an artistic temperament, who have arrived along similar lines to a more subjective understanding of art forms and monuments. They examine the works of art according to their own rules of taste with no other goal than to grade them in a well chosen vocabulary as to their personal appeal or displeasure. Most of these authors writing about artistic subjects have either not realized, or ignore the fact that such judgments of taste are only of a relative value, and constantly shift and decisively change in the course of time and circumstance.

This brings us to another of the limits of the history of art, namely that where it touches and distinguishes itself from aesthetics. These two disciplines are often incorrectly associated with one another, although their methods and problems of study are completely distinct. The history of art has nothing in common with aesthetics, or no more than political history or moral philosophy - no more than physiology does with psychology or natural science with metaphysics. It supplies aesthetics with at least some of its materials, and whether these are then used or not

is of no relevance to art historical research. In any case, the history of art is not entitled to reach over or up into the philosophical field, and to simply employ the aesthetic formulae or expressions from any system for its own disquisitions. It has nothing whatsoever to do with deduction or speculation: what it publishes are not aesthetic judgments, but historical facts which might then serve as a subject for inductive research ('inductive Forschung'). The benchmarks of the history of art are as little of an aesthetic nature as political history serves as the subject for moral judgments. This is not at all absolute but only relative, according to the ascending or descending direction of the artistic development of a particular period. For instance, the question whether a painting is beautiful or not is actually not in any way justifiable in the history of art, and the question for instance of whether Raphael or Michelangelo, Rembrandt or Rubens achieved greater perfection is an art historical absurdity. I can imagine the best history of art in which the word 'beautiful' does not at all occur. Art historical judgments are limited to the conditions under which a work of art was created, as these are discovered through research and autopsy. The question of the achievement of an artist in relation to their intention, and how either relates to the material at hand, can only be answered by a comparison with contemporaries, predecessors and followers, and never by the application of some general aesthetic benchmark.

The aestheticizing approach has been a great disadvantage for the reputation of a discipline which has only recently been successfully inaugurated. On the one hand, such hasty a judgment and classification, which omitted so many elements, could ultimately only be fruitless, while on the other, such a summary procedure could not inspire confidence among serious scholars in terms of academic viability as a method and discipline. It created the impression that history of art represented a sort of intellectual sofa – a sort of snack which carries with it the threat of indigestion – and not a hearty intellectual fare, a field fraught with difficulties and satisfaction like any other scholarly endeavor. For these reasons, the history of art has been unnecessarily often associated with aesthetics, and we are here all the more admonished to clarify the distinguishing characteristics more strongly than the common elements.

Things stand very differently in the relation of our discipline to the third subject of university study, a subject of great importance, the universal history of the medieval and modern periods. This is a relationship in which the common elements must be stressed more than the differences. While the history of art provides a sequel to archaeology, and preparation or exploratory subject to aesthetics, then its relation to history is more that of a consistent companion, a necessary complement or indispensable element. I do not refer to history as limited to that of states, regents or wars, as this was common for so long and frequently still is. Instead, I refer to the more general sense, which includes all intellectual activities, such as the state, religion, literature and art. This arrives at popular history, cultural history in the best sense, that is to say that in which Böckh used the term in his general philosophy. If this is to include philology, linguistics, literary history, archaeology and history,

antiquities and legal history, then what else should this be than the study of human intellectual history, which we might call cultural history if this term were not already being abused? various words denoting the same thing! In spite of all objections from political historians, history will continue to trend more toward universal research and study of all cultural monuments, especially in a period in which the greatest statesmen refute the ideal separation of the government and the people ('gegen die Trennung der Begriffe Regierung und Volk protestieren'). This will lead to political historians increasingly including more general aspects from the life of the population, the internal development of the nations which have contributed prominently to modern culture. History has already defined its subject to include such aspects. On this premise, the history of art, especially that of the medieval period, embodies a branch of modern history, much as archaeology in fact provides an extension of philology as it grows into a more general study of ancient culture - and this is a very important and essential branch, once it realizes a proper insight into the cultural activities of the population.

The unique character of the history of art, and the unique difficulties of its practice, are undoubtedly due to the completely different character of the sources which supply its conclusions. On the one hand, these are written sources, such as inscriptions, documents, letters or publications. These are documents to be dealt with according to the same rules as historical criticism, and requiring the same treatment as general history of politics and of states. On the other hand there are also those sources, the monuments, sculpture and art works which simultaneously comprise the central subject of our research. These are undisputedly the most precious legacy from the past. Just as the documents speak to us in words, so do these monuments address us through their forms - and learning to understand this language is the task of the history of art. By presenting clear images of earlier periods of culture, it already plays an important role in their recognition and appraisal. Most of our imagination and conceptions are related to the visual sense. For this reason they are both accessible and amendable visually. The monuments of art do not yield merely impressions from the past, a mere illustration of the documents or corrective to our over vivid imaginations, but they also reveal to us a reliable source of how earlier periods thought and felt, and of their entire intellectual powers. From this aspect especially, the history of art is an auxiliary science to general history, and an essential one at that. It is correct when the greatest ancient historian of our time, Theodor Mommsen, said that it would be absurd to study the history of a culture without the ability to read its language. Now, the art of a people is also a language. Its monuments are like milestones looming before the gaze of the researcher, arrayed along the road back, in which a culture has been led by its spirit ('Genius') through centuries and millennia. Indeed, they take us back into times from which written sources are not preserved, those - to my mind incorrectly - called prehistoric. The language of these unwritten documents is of a more ideal and natural character, independent of subjective factors and extrinsic contingencies than any of those in words or letters. It might be more difficult to understand, but it

cannot be misunderstood. Once we have learned it, this language can protect us as historians from the justified objection once clothed by the poet in the following words:

'Was ihr den Geist der Zeiten heisst, Das ist im Grund der Herren eigener Geist, In dem die Zeiten sich bespiegeln.' (What you call the spirit of the ages Is nothing other than your own Reflecting off of them, Goethe, Faust I, Act 1)

Considering the science of understanding the language and literary documents, and then ascertaining their authenticity and significance, how much more of a science must it be to distinguish and understand the monuments and artistic remains. The path to such knowledge is necessarily tedious and arduous, and for this reason, one should not insist on too many requirements along the development of its progress. Our subject does not contain any unusual prerequisite such as the production of art itself. I am convinced that the history of art demands nothing more of its disciples than the same level of general education and fresh sense that is necessary for the successful pursuit of any other exact science. Our discipline does not reach its conclusions by a unique or mysterious method. The obstacles to its progress are of a very extrinsic nature. They derive mostly from difficulties, bordering on impossibilities, in gaining an overview of the material and registering the relevant details. Our work is based on the precise study of the monuments. This realization does not require any special intuition or divination. The process is one of precise examination and continual comparison similar to that of the natural sciences, the most tangible of the sciences. The reason for the comparative disadvantage lies in the fact that our objects of study, the works of art, are not as easily reached as objects of nature, and there is neither a process of experiment available nor a corpus vile [nothing so worthless as to be used as an experimental object].

It goes without saying that everything we have said of the double nature of our sources and those of archaeology is valid. Archaeology has surveyed the vast amount of available material in its entirety, and there have never been any doubts as to its competence in the matter. Things are very different with the history of art of the more recent periods. It is difficult to come to terms with the overwhelming mass of material. The limits of the field are still being onerously defined, the discipline is still struggling for a general acceptance, and indeed for its justification at the great divide separating theory and practice - which is granted all of the other sciences. Who would not laugh at the thought of endorsing the opinion of a sculptor today about the origins or authenticity of an ancient sculpture or placing such a person in charge of a collection of sculpture or casts? Who would appoint a seal carver as director of a collection of historical coins? In some places, it is considered natural to

appoint painters as directors of picture galleries, while many scholars can still be heard to assert that only a painter can make judgments about a painting, a fallacy which had already been refuted by Rumohr.<sup>3</sup> The confusion about this distinction does great harm to our discipline, not merely in the opinion of the wider public, but also in our own activity. It creates misunderstandings about our competence as well as our duties. It prevents some of our number from studying the monuments, and leads many to satisfying themselves with purely literary pursuits. If it were actually the case that only an engraver can judge an early engraving, only a practicing painter an old painting, only an ivory carver a diptych, or a potter an ancient vase, then there would be no study of art or history of art. Yet it repeatedly proves itself necessary to demonstrate that this is a complete fallacy, especially in recruiting young students for our subject. How could it be possible to interest a new generation in a discipline which cannot make itself independent from practical exercises - as we are routinely told - whose best and ultimate truth is completely veiled to the eye, and available only to a practicing artist? We can rest assured that the history of art is in no such difficult situation, and the world will eventually realize that it is the hand which always follows the eye, and not vice versa. To approach a practicing painter today for an opinion about an old painting would be as foolish as requesting information about a medieval document from a modern diplomat. In both cases, the past and present are completely divergent, and the former can only be a subject for academic research.

Further still! Theory and practice are not only necessary to keep apart, they are in fact opposites to one another and provide quite distinct ways by which we arrive at knowledge. The one requires imitation of various proficiencies we have learned, while the other is that of research and pure observation. It is unavoidable that the two intersect at times, occasionally inhibit one another or confirm one another. Their goals are nevertheless so distinct that there cannot possibly be a concurrence of results.

The artist can be said to train his eye by the practice of his hand. He gropes the forms by depicting them, and sees and judges art only progressively on the basis of this sort of touch. What years of practice teach him is not art in general, but his own art, his unique view of form which blinds him or at least impairs him to all other visions. He is not even at home with his closest neighbor, far less in a remote period of the past, governed by traditions and techniques which are no longer

<sup>3</sup> C. F. von Rumohr, *Italienische Forschungen*, Berlin: Nicolai, 3, 1831, 148-154, concluding as follows: 'Who is competent to make the decisions regarding general questions of purely human interest? Not a member of the profession, however high or low their attainment, but any unbiased, pure, reflective person, be they an artist or member of any other profession. Only artists who have had the pleasure of being able to bring joy and satisfaction to people receptive to the clear fulfillment of dignified commissions can conceive the full value and vivid force of such acclaim. History shows that a broad popular receptivity to this sort of art is a prerequisite for its vigorous development, while an art that exists solely to please artists is an unbelievable absurdity.'

extant. I refer only to the robust artist who deserves the name. Such a thoughtful and purposeful artist can give us an idea of his own creation and techniques, and this might become theoretically applicable in a general way. Such an artist will in most cases have better things to do than to work for the rewards of connoisseurship, or occupy himself with companions or predecessors to his own techniques. Some of the more modest talents, who do pursue such things, have often never arrived at an original approach to form. They also lack that subjective veil which otherwise leads artists to ingenious or original artistic judgments, however incorrect. We cannot learn anything from these.

There are some who must be distinguished from the practicing artists, who began to practice art, but then abandoned it and turned to the theoretical study of art. These can profit from their experience, but this is not at all imperative. To enjoy and understand a work of visual art, it is not necessary to reproduce it repeatedly, as with a piece of music. The visual image has been completed and finished, and requires nothing more than serious contemplation. It is a completely philistine view to assume that it is necessary to have experience producing works of visual art in order to judge them. This thoughtlessly repeated assertion contains an unjustified imposition on the world of the practicing artist as well as an offence against the accepted aspirations of academic research. As art historians, we feel entitled to this, and for us there is no other avenue to realization than theory. Our occupation is to train our eye alone, with no regard to manual exercise. Our goal is simply to learn to see.

Nevertheless, this is not as simple as it might appear. Primitive people and children register very incomplete visual impressions. The human eye as well as the hand was originally untrained, and it required millennia of slow practice for art to develop to its present responsiveness. In ancient Japan, India or Ireland, the artists who imperfectly invoked the human figure and its movement were not lacking in manual dexterity - many of their finest and most intricate work proves this. They did not have the same visual experience as it gradually accrued through the subsequent centuries. Humanity slowly learned to see, precisely in the same way as it developed a more differentiated sense of sound and language. In both of the two great cultural cycles, antiquity and the modern period, it almost had to begin completely afresh. The development of the sense of color provides an especially instructive example. How long did it take until humanity could recognize and ultimately distinguish the colors present in the rainbow! The color blue for instance, is neither mentioned in the Rigveda, the Zendavesta nor in the Bible. In all of those sources, blue is combined with the colour black, while the same seems to be true of the word 'kyanaeus' in Homer in spite of the fact that our word 'cyan' derives from it - and throughout antiquity there was never a word for pure blue, since 'caeruleus' can also not be identified as such. It is no different with designations of the colour green, which is lacking from the earliest Sanskrit and middle Persian documents, while the Greek word 'chloros' is barely distinguishable from 'ochros,' or yellow. Since there was clearly a necessity to recognize the blue of sky and sea, the green of the trees

and fields, we are clearly dealing a partial colour blindness which can only have its source in an insufficient distinction. Just as the three ancient languages have their vowels limited to the simple a, i and u, so differently from the richly diverse vowel sounds of a modern language such as English, this can only be explained as an undeveloped level of hearing.<sup>4</sup>

This slow development of the sense of colour has a parallel in the delayed discovery of the laws of harmony in music. This is the reason that painting, as well as music, only reached the peak of their development comparatively recently. Both of them are specifically modern arts. What a long development of sight and hearing was necessary before a painting by Rembrandt or a symphony by Beethoven could come about and be appreciated! In antiquity, there was simply no understanding for such climaxes in the arts, just as we today stand uncomprehendingly before their humble early beginnings in both. This is another reason that our developed and refined point of view will never allow us to appreciate their polychromy.

In this way, the human sense of sight approached perfection through the process of a millennium. This occurred in the service of art, regardless of whether art was in a period of ascent or decline. It occurred during a period when no academic study of the history of art existed, and art will continue to rise and fall according to inexplicable forces, independent of our studies. As art historians, we do not presume to influence the course of art in any way. Once the need has arisen to recognize our artistic past, we should be permitted to make the necessary moves in our field of history. This is a field which we intend to clear and build upon, not least of all for the edification of our artists, since they are so given to talking about it. This would have remained an undiscovered territory to them, if the traditional theory had gone unchallenged. For a century, artists had been traveling to Italy without taking cognizance of antiquity or the Cinquecento - until Winckelmann made them aware of the former and Rumohr of the latter.

More general and encompassing requirements are set for the eye of the art historian than of the artist. Our vision must be completely different because it is devoted exclusively to recognition of the subject, without a trace of influence from views about form, or subsidiary intentions surrounding imitation or execution. To reach a goal, it is necessary to pursue it strenuously. It is nothing to be attained in passing, even if it were less lofty. Our discipline has proven that this can be achieved along the pure theoretical lines we have discussed. Certain talented individuals have

<sup>4</sup> Lazarus Geiger, *Zur Entwicklungsgeschichte der Menschheit Vorträge*, Stuttgart: Cotta 1871, 45 ff. It is true that Aristotle described the rainbow as including three colours: red, yellow and green (just as the Edda also called it a bridge of three colours), while Xenophanes saw the iris as nothing more than a purple, reddish and yellowish cloud two hundred years earlier. Democritus and the Pythagoreans assumed the existence of four basic colours: black, white, red and yellow, a view which held sway for a long period, with references from Cicero, Pliny and Quintilian confirming that the Greek painters well into the time of Alexander used only those four colours.

also proven the degree of certainty that can be attained in certain favorable circumstances by the eye of connoisseurship.

For this reason, we should not allow ourselves to be deceived by the crude expressions and invocations which are commonly used to pigeon-hole examples of art. In a certain way, the individual must repeat the development of an entire nation, and in the same sense, our eye must follow the entire development of art in refining its visual capacity. We are facing a great task, but one that is not impossible. There is no soul, no spirit and no feeling in an art work, which is not introduced and supported by visible and concrete forms, and which for this reason cannot also be clearly and distinctly understood along the same lines. This formal language of art must of course first be learned in the same manner as all other languages. It is possible that not everybody is equally gifted or able to sufficiently practice in order to achieve a proper mastery of this. When we are successful, and in the degree to which we are successful, then the script of every true artist will cease to be a puzzle. When this is achieved, we can confidently approach their work, and recall the felicitous words of a great friend of mine and a remarkable connoisseur, Ivan Lermolieff: 'A work of art will always give you an answer if you are able to pose the question correctly. If an answer is not forthcoming, then you have either not completely discovered the question, or it might not possess a language in which to speak' - that is to say, it might not be a true work of art.

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