

Looking for the Concept of Style (1753–1953)*

Ján BAKOŠ

Abstract

A number of authors have written about the history of the concept of style, one of the key formulating concepts of art history. Those deserving special mention here are Jan Białostocki ('Styl', in: BIAŁOSTOCKI, J.: *Historia sztuki wśród nauk humanistycznych*. Wrocław-Warszawa-Kraków-Gdańsk 1980, pp. 36-55), Willibald Sauerländer, ('From Stilus to Style: Reflections on the Fate of a Notion', in: *Art History*, 6, 1983, no. 3, pp. 253-270), Carlo Ginzburg, ('Stil. Einschließung und Ausschließung', in: GINZBURG, C.: *Holzungen. Über Nähe und Distanz*. Berlin 1999, pp. 168-211), and Robert Suckale ('Stilgeschichte', in: *Kunsthistorische Arbeitsblätter*, 11, 2001, pp. 17-26). The present study is an attempt to map in greater detail the efforts of several generations of scholars to define style, starting with the 'discovery' of the history of style in the mid-eighteenth century and ending with the crisis that ensued after the end of the Second World War.

Keywords: style, the history of style, art history

I.

Enlightenment: the history of style is born

In 1764, Johann J. Winckelmann (1717–1768) rejected the traditional concept of style as a timeless ideal, preferring to see it as a historical phenomenon that evolves with the epoch, as past testimony. He thereby bid farewell to the history of artists, and ushered in the notion of a variety of period styles ('verschiedene Stile der Zeiten'), shaped by climatic conditions, the national character ('nationale Charaktere'), and established by society. Thus

a new paradigm was born: the history of style – or art history as the history of styles.¹ Winckelmann shared the view that classical beauty was the height of the history of style; nonetheless he could never quite bring himself to abandon the timeless classical norms that were considered the essence of art. Nor could he entirely relinquish the historicity of style. He therefore combined a nostalgic, retrospective historicism (mourning a 'lost paradise') with an optimistic futurism (the belief that it was possible to approximate the classic ideal – however imperfectly). The purportedly classical essence of style (based on

* This is the introduction to a more extensive work by the author, 'Mapping the Concept of Style 1753–2003'. The article has been written thanks to the support of the research Grant Agency VEGA (a joint advisory body of the Slovak Ministry of Education, Science, Research and Sports and an auxiliary body of the presidium of the Slovak Academy of Sciences, grant no. 2/0045/19).

¹ WINCKELMANN, J. J.: *Geschichte der Kunst des Altertums*. Dresden 1764–1767; SAUERLÄNDER, W.: From Stilus to Style: Reflections on the Fate of a Notion. In: *Art History*,

6, 1983, no. 3, pp. 253-270, esp. 266, refers to the 'fateful interconnection of Stilus and Chronos'; MÜLLER, A.: *Stil. Studien zur Begriffsgeschichte im romanisch-deutschen Sprachraum*. Diss. Erlangen and Nürnberg 1981, p. 123. According to Hubert Locher: 'Mit J. J. Winckelmann... wird Stil zu einer kunsthistorischen Ordnungskategorie. Winckelmann fundiert damit jenes Paradigma der Stil-Geschichte, das bis ins 20. Jahrhundert die Identität des Faches Kunstgeschichte bestimmen wird.' *Metzler Lexikon Kunstwissenschaft. Ideen, Methoden, Begriffe*. Ed.: PFISTERER, U. Stuttgart – Weimar 2003, p. 337.

the democracy and freedom to which he subscribed) was thereby consigned to the past. Winckelmann formulated a theory of style that was two-pronged in the sense that it combined the autonomous with the heteronomous understanding of the history of style, and, above all, it brought together ahistorical normativism (the timeless aesthetic norm of art – ‘beauty’) (‘Schönheit’) and historicism (style as the expression of a particular historical period).² At the same time, he introduced the two positions of the expressionist conception of style: style as testimony of a period and style as national constancy.³

Alternative views were proffered by Winckelmann’s contemporaries: Georges-Louis Leclerc, Comte de Buffon (1707–1788), and Johann Wolfgang Goethe (1749–1832). The latter two, Buffon and Goethe, presented ahistorical conceptions. Notably, though, these did not represent a return to the normative theory of style. Theirs were open concepts of style – anthropological in Buffon’s case and noetic in Goethe’s.⁴ In 1753, in his celebrated lecture at the Académie Française, Buffon juxtaposed style with recognizing objectivity, with the person independent of reality. He understood style

to be anthropologically specific, the manifestation of human self-realization, and coined his well-known epigram: ‘Ces choses – les connaissances, les faits et les découvertes – sont hors de l’homme, le style c’est l’homme même.’⁵ Goethe, on the other hand, distinguished between style and imitations of nature and artistic manner. In contrast to Buffon, he attributed to style the ability to capture the essence of a thing. He thereby linked the notion of artistic originality (as the corollary of external phenomenon and artistic stereotype) with the ability to grasp the ‘essence of things’.⁶ And unlike Buffon, Goethe favoured a noetic normative understanding of style.⁷ However, it is important to note that before developing this gnoseological (i.e. not purely aesthetic) apotheosis of style, Goethe had understood style in art to mean the creative work of a national genius.

II.

Romanticism: style as the expression of the era

In the Romantic Period, style became a unique, definitively historical and historically relative

² Thus Winckelmann combined the idea of historical uniqueness with the humanist conception of historical cyclicality. But, unlike Vasari, he replaced the three-stage (biological) style with a four-stage cycle.

³ Winckelmann divided style into four historical periods along both a temporal and an ethnic axis – dividing the ancient history of art into Egyptian, Etruscan, Greek and Roman styles. On Winckelmann’s theory of style, see DIITMANN, L.: Zur Entwicklung des Stilbegriffs bis Winckelmann. In: *Kunst und Kunsttheorie 1400–1900*. Ed.: GANZ, P. Wiesbaden 1991, pp. 189–218; and DÉCULTOT, E.: Le style chez Winckelmann, lecture at *Le style* conference, INHA, Paris, 23 April 2003.

⁴ According to MÜLLER 1981 (see in note 1), p. 126.

⁵ Among the numerous interpretations of the Count de Buffon’s understanding of style (see, for instance, MÜLLER, W. G.: *Topik des Stilbegriffes. Zur Geschichte des Stilverständnisses von der Antike bis zur Gegenwart*. Darmstadt 1981), it is worth mentioning Carl Ginzburg and his ‘Stil. Einschliessung und Ausschliessung’ (GINZBURG, C.: *Holzungen. Über Nähe und Distanz*. Berlin 1999). Ginzburg was dismissive of the notion that Count de Buffon’s epigram should be interpreted as meaning style was subjective and individual, as suggested by Georg W. F. HEGEL (*Vorlesungen über die Ästhetik*. Stuttgart

1971, p. 410) and Arthur C. DANTO (*The Transfiguration of the Commonplace*. Cambridge 1981, p. 198). But neither did Ginzburg accept Buffon’s idea that style was anthropologically specific to humans, which corresponded most closely to Buffon’s classicist view of humans as the universal being (‘grand écrivain’). (See MÜLLER 1981 [see in note 5], pp. 40–44.) Ginzburg thought Buffon understood style as the supra-individual human cognition of the world. See also ZERNER, H.: Buffon, le Discours sur le Style, lecture at *Le Style* conference, INHA, Paris, 23 April 2003. Bruno Klein interpreted Buffon’s thinking quite differently. See *Stilfragen zur Kunst des Mittelalters. Eine Einführung*. Eds.: KLEIN, B. – BOERNER, B. Berlin 2006, pp. 8–9.

⁶ ‘... der Stil ruht auf den tiefsten Grundfesten der Erkenntnis, auf dem Wesen der Dinge, insofern uns erlaubt ist, es in sichtbaren und greiflichen Gestaltung zu erkennen.’ *Goethes Werke. Hamburger Ausgabe*, vol. XII. Hamburg 1953, p. 32. Originally GOETHE, J. W. von: Einfache Nachahmung der Natur, Manier, Stil. In: *Der Teutsche Merkur*, Februar 1789. On this see also SAUERLÄNDER, W.: Réflexions à d’un texte de Goethe, lecture at *Le style* conference, INHA, Paris, 23 April 2003.

⁷ SCHNEIDER, N.: *Geschichte der Kunsttheorie. Von der Antike bis zum 18. Jahrhundert*. Köln – Weimar – Wien 2011, p. 42.

concept. It was Georg W. F. Hegel's (1770–1831) metaphysical, historically linear and teleological doctrine of history that would prove decisive in bridging the classicist notion of rule-bound styles, the romantic notion of the totality of historicity and the historical singularity of style.⁸ Hegel, as we know, transformed Winckelmann's cultural and historical theory of the history of style, and came to see art as the metaphysical, supra-individual expression of 'the spirit of the age and people' ('Zeitgeist und Volksgeist'). Hegel incorporated this sensory, physiognomic manifestation of spiritual content into his universal vision of world history. In this vision the history of art was manifested in three unique, mutually incompatible, yet equally valued, art forms that followed on one from another: 'symbolische Kunstform', 'klassische Kunstform' and 'romantische Kunstform'. Hegel viewed these as expressions of the various developmental stages of the world spirit ('Weltgeist'). They were no longer linked by a timeless, immutable essence or art norm, other than being part of a historically realized essential drive towards an implicit, final historical goal: the absolute spirit returning to itself. As is evident in Hegel's lectures on aesthetics from the 1820s, Hegel took Carl Friedrich von Rumohr's (1785–1843)⁹ concept of style, and thought style should reflect the qualities of the material and the rules of the type of art.¹⁰ In that sense, one could say that Hegel brought together the classical and romantic conceptions of art, dividing art into expressionist style (reflecting the qualities of the material and the rules of the art form) and form (the expression of uniqueness and originality).¹¹ Hegel's conception of art form

as expression would have an enormous influence on subsequent debates on style in art history. But before that, discussions on style were dominated by materialist and functionalist critiques of Romantic metaphysical spiritualism.

III.

Historicism and materialism: style as a functional tool

In their attempt to renew the past through historical style, proponents of historicism adopted not just the romantic idea of style as the expression of an era and its world view,¹² but also of residual normativism. Eugène Viollet-le-Duc's (1814–1879) definition, 'Le style est... la manifestation d'un idéal établi sur un principe',¹³ bears traces of the normative understanding of style as an ideal, formulated by Gian Pietro Bellori (1613–1696). But whereas Winckelmann's ideal norm was classical Greek, Viollet-le-Duc's was Gothic. Pragmatism also reared its head, in the preference for a revitalized rhetorical theory of style rather than a historical vocabulary in which a style was selected according to purpose.¹⁴ In the second half of the nineteenth century this utilitarian attitude to selecting styles, closely connected to the liberalism of the era, became dominant. Historical styles were used as 'linguistic' media.

Responding to this idealistic understanding of style, the debates of the 1820s on style began to reveal a materialist attitude. Thus, Carl Friedrich von Rumohr (1785–1843), in his *Italienische Forschungen* of 1827–1831, came to reject Winckelmann's understanding of style as the expression of a spe-

⁸ See PIEL, F.: Der Historische Stilbegriff und die Geschichtlichkeit der Kunst. In: *Kunstgeschichte und Kunsttheorie im 19. Jahrhundert (Probleme der Kunstwissenschaft, 1)*. Ed.: BAUER, H. Berlin 1963, p. 20; also PFISTERER, U.: *Donatello und die Entdeckung der Stile 1430–1445*. München 2002, p. 23.

⁹ MÜLLER 1981 (see in note 1), p. 129.

¹⁰ *Stilepoche: Theorie und Diskussion*. Eds.: POR, P. – RADNÓTI, S. Frankfurt a. M. 1990, pp. 99–100.

¹¹ On this see MIKLOWITZ, P. S.: The Ontological Status of Style in Hegel's Phenomenology. In: *Idealistic Studies*, vol. 13, 1983, no. 1, pp. 61–73.

¹² An example is the work of the architect Augustus W. N. Pugin (1812–1852), a prominent representative of the Gothic revival.

¹³ VIOUET-LE-DUC, E.: *Dictionnaire raisonné de l'architecture française du XI^e au XVI^e siècle*, vol. VIII. Paris 1869, pp. 477–501.

¹⁴ In this sense Heinrich Hübsch's *In welchem Style sollen wir bauen*, published in 1828 was characteristic. The desire of nineteenth-century architects for an original synthetic style was, as C. van Eck, J. McAllister and R. van de Vall concluded, contradicted the pragmatic eclecticism of style. See *The Question of Style in Philosophy and the Arts*. Eds.: ECK, C. van – MCALLISTER, J. – VALL, R. van de. Cambridge 1995, p. 10.

cific ‘spiritual direction’, or as the ‘practices of a particular school or person’.¹⁵ Rumohr was of the opinion that the use of style was ‘secondary to the internal qualities of the materials’.¹⁶ His materialistic conception of style, as ‘craftsmanlike’ at heart, preceded Gottfried Semper’s (1803–1879) ‘practical aesthetics’.¹⁷ For Semper style was the identity of the stylistic form and its practical genesis, or, in other words, style was what emerged from the practical determinants (‘Agentien’) of the materials, techniques, and function.¹⁸ But he also considered it to be a means of decoration. Semper derived the prototypical forms (‘Urformen’) of style from elementary human needs materialized as the basic ‘original motifs’ (‘Urmotiven’) of style. The ‘clothing principle’ (‘Prinzip der Bekleidung’), the manifestation of an ancient human preference for ornamentation and disguise, was then integrated into the idea of a materialistic and functionally determined style. Over time the stylistic *Urmotiven* combined with different materials, techniques, and functions (‘Prinzip des Stoffwechsels’). In Semper’s view, the resulting combinations gradually became etched into human historical memory and the stylistic forms then lost their original purpose, becoming symbolic forms instead. The functionalist concept of style thus became a rhetorical ‘linguistic’ medium.¹⁹

IV. Modernity: style as an autonomous principle in the evolution of art

At the end of the nineteenth century, with the pressures of the open art market and in reaction to the materialist, eclectic and utilitarian character of historicism, modernity brought with it the ideas of originality and autonomous art. In conjunction with the positivist cult of scientism these ideas culminated in the emergence of art history as an independent scientific discipline. For the leading representatives of this era, Alois Riegl (1858–1905) and Heinrich Wölfflin (1864–1945), art history’s independence and scientific status were associated with a concept of style that was both autonomous and objective and an independent principle of form that was not tied to the artist.²⁰ And, as style was an independent principle of form, it had its own immanent historical laws based on the polarity of psychological perception.²¹ Rumohr’s materialistic deterministic concept of style and Semper’s functionalistic, deterministic, and rhetorical concept of style were therefore replaced by the conception that style was an autonomous form guided by an immanent developmental principle. Riegl called this principle ‘Kunstwollen’.²² In Riegl’s conception of style, formalism was linked to the idea of autonomy, the immanence of history, and evolutionism. Nonetheless the original romantic (Hegelian) idea of style as a manifestation of the

¹⁵ RUMOHR, C. F. von: *Italienische Forschungen*, vol. 1. Berlin – Stettin 1827, p. 87.

¹⁶ Ibidem. On Rumohr’s understanding of style see HEINZ, R.: *Stil als geisteswissenschaftliche Kategorie*. Würzburg 1986, pp. 212–214; AUF DER HEYDE, A.: *Stil/stylus: Rumohrs Versuch einer Neuprägung des Stilbegriffs und die Flucht in die Kulturgeschichte*. In: *L’idée du style dans l’historiographie artistique: variantes nationales et transmissions. Actes du colloque (Cortona, 16-18 May 2007)*. Eds.: FROMMEL, S. – BRUCCULERI, A. Roma 2012 [2013], pp. 21–33.

¹⁷ HEINZ 1986 (see in note 16), p. 214.

¹⁸ SEMPER, G.: *Der Stil in der technischen und tektonischen Künsten oder praktische Ästhetik*, 2 vols. München 1860–1863. On this see also RYKWERT, J.: *Semper and the Conception of Style*. In: *Gottfried Semper und die Mitte des 19. Jahrhunderts*. Eds.: BÖRSCH-SUPAN, E. et al. Basel 1976, pp. 67–81.

¹⁹ SEMPER 1860–1863 (see in note 18), vol. 1.

²⁰ The concept of ‘Kunstgeschichte ohne Namen’ – ‘History of Art without Names’. WÖLFFLIN, H.: *Gedanken zur Kunstgeschichte*. Basel 1941, pp. 15–16.

²¹ RIEGL, A.: *Stilfragen. Grundlegungen zu einer Geschichte der Ornamentik*. Berlin 1893 – the ‘haptic–optic’ dichotomy; WÖLFFLIN, H.: *Kunstgeschichtliche Grundbegriffe. Das Problem der Stilentwicklung in der neueren Kunst*. München 1915, listed five binary pairs, such as ‘linear–painterly, plane–recession, and closed–open form’.

²² RIEGL, A.: *Spätromische Kunstindustrie*. Wien 1927, p. 216.

²³ Lorenz Dittmann: ‘Riegl ging von den „Stilphänomenen“ auf die „Stilprinzipien“.’ See DITTMANN, L.: *Stil – Symbol – Struktur. Studien zu Kategorien der Kunstgeschichte*. München 1967, pp. 217–218.

thinking of an epoch would soon creep back into Riegl's understanding of style as the autonomous formal principle of representation:²³ thus, in his understanding then style was the mediation of the epochal understanding of the world, the articulation of a (co-created) view of the world.²⁴

Doubts about whether style was purely autonomous also found their way into Wölfflin's formalist, autonomist and depersonalized objectivist theory. These were then amplified by criticism from those advocating a heteronomous (content-based or expressionist) approach to style.²⁵ Wölfflin would allow that there was a connection between the immanent evolution of visual forms ('Sehformen') and general spiritual histories, but insisted that this was no cause and effect relation ('Grund und Folge'), but the manifestation of 'a common root'.²⁶ Nonetheless his critics forced him into making some concessions towards the expressionist understanding of style. Instead of developing an exclusively immanent evolution of style (a permanent shifting between two poles of perception and the associated style [form] principle of representation), Wölfflin elaborated his theory of the double root of style. This recognized that, alongside the primary laws of the immanent evolution of autonomous style, uniqueness of expression played a role.²⁷

Here we should note that Von Rumohr anticipated this idea of a two-pronged approach to style

when distinguishing between style as expressing the uniqueness of an epoch, nation, or individual on the one hand, (which he did not consider to be style proper) and a 'universal concept of style', lurking 'unconsciously in the background' on the other.²⁸ Rumohr's and Wölfflin's double-root conceptions of style were hierarchical and consisted of a primary element, the 'universal form of perception' (in Wölfflin's case the 'allgemeine Anschauungsform'), and a secondary one (expression).²⁹

Following Wölfflin and Riegl, the Viennese art historian, Max Dvořák (1874–1921), entered the debate. In his *Idealismus und Naturalismus in der gotischen Skulptur und Malerei* published in 1917, Dvořák rejected Riegl's idea of a parallelism between art and world view (or the creation of world-view art) in favour of the Hegelian idea that art expressed the ideas of an epoch.³⁰ Aesthetes and art philosophers began further propagating this idea in the 1920s. For example, Hermann Nohl³¹, inspired by Wilhelm Dilthey (1833–1911), considered historical forms of style to be embodiments of three fundamental world views: naturalism, idealism, and pantheism.

V.

'Constructionists' versus 'Individualists'

The gradual divergence of the avant-garde art movement from modernism can be seen in the shift

²⁴ CARQUÉ, B.: *Stil und Erinnerung. Französische Hofkunst im Jahrhundert Karls V. und im Zeitalter ihrer Deutung*, Göttingen 2004, p. 135. In Riegl Hegel's 'Weltgeist' was transformed into the immanent principle of 'Kunstwollen' (HEINZ 1986 [see in note 16], p. 270) running in parallel with 'eines gemeinsamen höheren Wollens'. See RIEGL 1927 (see in note 22), p. 15; RIEGL, A.: *Historische Grammatik der bildenden Künste*. Graz – Köln 1966, p. 22. See also KLEIN – BOERNER 2006 (see in note 5), p. 71.

²⁵ One example is PANOFSKY, E.: Das Problem des Stils in der bildenden Kunst. In: *Zeitschrift für Ästhetik und allgemeine Kunstwissenschaft*, 10, 1915, pp. 460–467; reprint in PANOFSKY, E.: *Aufsätze zu Grundfragen der Kunstwissenschaft*. Berlin 1964, p. 29.

²⁶ WÖLFFLIN 1941 (see in note 20), pp. 20–21.

²⁷ WÖLFFLIN, H.: Das Problem des Stils in der bildenden Kunst. In: *Sitzungsberichte der königlich preussischen Akademie der Wissenschaften*, vol. 1. Berlin 1912, p. 573; WÖLFFLIN 1915 (see in note 21), Einleitung, part 'Die doppelte Wurzel des

Stils', published 1929, pp. 11–14. In contrast, Panofsky thought Wölfflin's theory of the double root of style confused effects (i.e. visual forms) with causes. PANOFSKY 1915 (see in note 25), printed in PANOFSKY 1964 (see in note 25), p. 29.

²⁸ RUMOHR 1827 (see in note 15), p. 103.

²⁹ HEINZ 1986 (see in note 16), pp. 273–274.

³⁰ DVOŘÁK, M.: *Kunstgeschichte als Geistesgeschichte. Studien zur abendländischen Kunstentwicklung*. München 1924. See also PASSARGE, W.: *Die Philosophie der Kunstgeschichte in der Gegenwart*. Berlin 1930, pp. 50–51, 59–60.

³¹ '... die Stilgegensätze zu interpretieren als der verschiedenen möglichen Auseinandersetzungen des Menschen mit der Welt auf dem Boden der Anschauung, als die Typen malerischer Weltanschauung.' NOHL, H.: Stil und Weltanschauung. In: NOHL, H.: *Die Weltanschauungen der Malerei*. Jena 1908 [1920], pp. 7–12. See PASSARGE 1930 (see in note 30), pp. 37–40.

away from the doctrine of autonomy and towards the doctrine of heteronomy (social activity) in art, and in the displacement of formalism by expressionism and constructivism. This divergence contributed to the increasing unease over questions regarding the identity of style. The theoretical debate on style ranged wide to include criticism of the concept of monolithic style, doubts over the precise nature of style as the basic pillar of academic knowledge about art and art history, contradictions between rhetoric and expressionism, and between instrumentality and autonomy but also between the concepts of the abstract nature and historical individuality (historicism) of style. In the 1920s and 1930s, the arena of art discourse was delineated at one end by a ‘universal theory of art’ (‘allgemeine Kunstwissenschaft’) and by specific styles within art history (‘Kunstgeschichte’) at the other.³² Various attempts were made to ‘rescue’ the concept of style – both as a theoretical construct and as a specific historical concept. These included, for example, attempts to distinguish between ‘the constitutive and reflective use of style’,³³ or between the ‘interpretive’ and ‘morphological’ concepts of style.³⁴ Other efforts proposed the contrast should be between the ‘descriptive’ and the ‘normative’ concepts of style.³⁵ For example, in 1926 the German art historian Margarete Hoerner³⁶ proposed distinguishing between the aesthetic and historical, cultural historical, and immanent historical polarities of style. She considered aesthetic style to be the basis of all art as it was capable of ensuring the identity and historical variability of art through ‘modifying factors’ (materials, techniques, and purposes).³⁷ Two years later, in

1928, the Heidelberg philosopher Friedrich Kreis published his work on interpretations of the concept of style in art history.³⁸ Kreis established the use of the concept of style to distinguish between style and the aesthetic dimension ‘as a principle of art history’. The essence of style, he argued, had to be clearly distinguished from aesthetic value. Anticipating the post-war discourse, Kreis began by contrasting art form with aesthetic value (‘anschaulich-formale Gestaltung – ästhetische Form’) and the binarity of style as artistic quality as against style as an epistemological medium. In this respect, style was posited as the timeless realization of artistic art on the one hand and the result of a ‘conceptual working’ or theoretical generalization of art works on the other.³⁹

VI.

Historical polarity and the sceptics

One can consider the aforementioned attempts at a historical systemization of style forms to be directed at specifying style. The aim was not to identify theoretically the concept of style but to specify the basic types of historical style and thereby identify the basic binary structure of the history of style. Such efforts included, for example, that of the German historian Ernst Cohn-Wiener (1882–1941), who proposed distinguishing between ‘constructive and decorative’ styles, or ‘tectonic and counter-tectonic’ styles, as expressing the basic function–form binarity.⁴⁰ Other attempts include Ludwig Coellen’s two basic ‘organizational forms of art’ – ‘Cubism’ and ‘Organicism’,⁴¹ which are applications of Riegl’s

³² According to Paul Frankl, the dispute was between ‘constructivists’ and ‘individualists’. See HALBERTSMA, M.: *Wilhelm Pinder und die deutsche Kunstgeschichte*. Worms 1992, p. 93.

³³ WIND, E.: *Ästhetischer und kunstwissenschaftlicher Gegenstand. Ein Beitrag zur Methodologie der Kunstgeschichte*. Hamburg 1922.

³⁴ NOACK, H.: *Die systematische und methodische Bedeutung des Stilbegriffs*. Diss. Hamburg 1923.

³⁵ KAINZ, F.: Vorarbeiten zu einer Philosophie des Stils. In: *Zeitschrift für Ästhetik und allgemeine Kunstwissenschaft*, 20, 1926, pp. 21–63.

³⁶ HOERNER, M.: Die Anwendung des Stilbegriffes innerhalb der Kunstwissenschaften. In: *Zeitschrift für Ästhetik und allge-*

meine Kunstwissenschaft, 20, 1926, pp. 322–325.

³⁷ For more on this see HEINZ 1986 (see in note 16).

³⁸ KREIS, F.: *Der kunstgeschichtliche Gegenstand. Ein Beitrag zur Deutung des Stilbegriffes*. Stuttgart 1928, pp. 5–46.

³⁹ *Ibidem*, p. 18.

⁴⁰ COHN-WIENER, E.: *Die Entwicklungsgeschichte der Stile in der bildenden Kunst*. Leipzig 1910. On this see PASSARGE 1930 (see in note 30), p. 65.

⁴¹ Coellen further divided them into ornamental, sculptural and tectonic styles versus tectonic and painterly styles. PASSARGE 1930 (see in note 30), p. 72.

binary ‘Kristallinismus–Organismus’.⁴² Coellen did not accept Dvořák’s heteronomous version of Riegl’s theory of the ‘idealism–naturalism’ binary,⁴³ and in his work on method in art history, published in 1924, presented ‘cubism–organicism’ as the basis of an autonomous ‘universal history of style’.⁴⁴ Attempts to identify a binary structure of the history of style that would last for all time generated little response. For example, Wölfflin’s pupil, the German medievalist Hermann Beenken (1896–1952),⁴⁵ was critical of the ‘rigid categories of the antithetic method’.⁴⁶ Beenken suggested a historical comparison might prove more fruitful than the style antithesis⁴⁷ as it would shed light on flexibilities and differences in styles and thereby reveal more of the internal developmental context.⁴⁸

VII.

The beginning of the end of homogenous style

In the 1920s, the German art historian Wilhelm Pinder (1878–1947) questioned the fundamental premise of the history of style – that style was homogenous. Pinder criticized both the premise that there were homogenous epochs of style and the accompanying notion that the history of style was linear. He mockingly characterized it as the ‘goose-march of styles’ (‘Gensemarsch der Stile’). In his well-known work of 1926 on the generational problem, he presented his pioneering theory that style was a plurality of simultaneous generational styles – ‘the

non-contemporaneity of the contemporary’.⁴⁹ In so doing, he questioned whether the history of style was indeed the history of great homogenous styles, thereby placing the very concept of style in question. However, as we shall see, he himself did not venture down that pathway.

VIII.

The sociological view of typology

Russian (Soviet) scholars also joined the theoretical debates on style of the 1920s. Their interest lay not so much in the problem of the internal simultaneous differentiation of styles as in the diachronic pluralism of historical styles. Their starting point was the premise of epochal cultural and stylistic unity. Critical of the formalist interpretation of style, they proposed a number of sociological interpretations of a historical typology of style. Relying on Hegel’s teleological idea of history – the idea of historical inevitability – they attempted to legitimize the (revolutionary) present. Their interpretation covered broad spans, ranging from materialist determinism, similar to Wilhelm Hausenstein’s (1882–1957) sociological theory of style, understood as the ‘identity of social forms and the specificities of style’,⁵⁰ to formalist functionalism. In other words, it stretched from paralysed economic formations and artistic styles to a functionalist interpretation of art history as a successive series of dominant style functions belonging to the various class ideologies.⁵¹

⁴² Riegl set out this theory in his lecture series *Historische Grammatik der bildenden Künste* in 1897–1899.

⁴³ PASSARGE 1930 (see in note 30), p. 63.

⁴⁴ COELLEN, L.: *Die Methode der Kunstgeschichte. Eine geschichtsphilosophische Untersuchung*. Darmstadt 1924.

⁴⁵ BEENKEN, H.: Konsequenzen und Aufgaben der Stilanalyse. In: *Zeitschrift für Ästhetik und allgemeine Kunstwissenschaft*, 18, 1925, pp. 417–437.

⁴⁶ PASSARGE 1930 (see in note 30), pp. 68–69.

⁴⁷ Ibidem.

⁴⁸ BEENKEN 1925 (see in note 45), p. 435; HALBERTSMA 1992 (see in note 32), p. 205.

⁴⁹ PINDER, W.: *Das Problem der Generation in der Kunstgeschichte Europas*. Berlin 1926.

⁵⁰ ‘Gleichsetzungen von Gesellschaftsformen und Stileigentümlichkeiten’. HAUSENSTEIN, W.: Versuch einer Soziologie der Kunst. In: *Archiv für Sozialwissenschaft und Sozialpolitik*, 36, 1913, pp. 758–794; HAUSENSTEIN, W.: *Bild und Gemeinschaft. Entwurf einer Soziologie der Kunst*. München 1920. Here I quote from BETTHAUSEN, P. – FEIST, P. H. – FORK, C.: *Metzler Kunsthistoriker Lexikon*. Stuttgart – Weimar 1999, p. 157.

⁵¹ I. Ioffe’s theory of the parallelism of class formations, ideologies, and functions of art: from style as ornament (the aristocracy) to style as knowledge (the bourgeoisie) and style as constructing life (industrial society) to the style of proletarian culture (communism). IOFFE, I.: *Kultura i stil’*. Leningrad 1927; IOFFE, I.: *Syntetičeskaja istorija iskusstv*. Leningrad 1933.

IX. Deductive systematization

The belief that the route out of conceptual chaos might lie in a precise definition of the concept of style and in the careful differentiation of the problem of style led to a complicated abstract system of style. It began with Platonic ‘realism’. That is, with the assumption that all its concrete manifestations were contained within the abstract concept, and that the theoretical conceptual system implicitly contained all the various historical style positions, and thus had the potential to incorporate all the important concepts and types of style within a single, harmonic, and universal whole. The following quote by the philosopher Emil Uitz (1883–1956) is characteristic of this view: ‘The concept of style may well be ambiguous but its numerous branches... can be organized, and identified as the branches of a universal concept of style. The entirely achievable task is to obtain a theoretical overview of all the possible styles, creating a table of concepts in which the real, that is, the historically given styles can be verified along with their combinations.’⁵² Moreover, this applied to epochal style (‘Zeitstil’): the most important concept of art history relating to its entire history. The various style concepts were, Uitz thought, merely ‘firm points in the coordination system of history’. From this perspective, the view that style was a philosophical problem, a philosophy of (art) history, was entirely logical and justified. Uitz had articulated this ‘anti-historicist’ approach that was characteristic of the advocates of ‘allgemeine Kunstwissenschaft’ back in 1911.⁵³ He thereby formulated a concept of style as function. He attributed a purely classificatory and

systematic role to the concept of style in organizing the history of art, understood, characteristically, as an ‘evolutionary system’.⁵⁴

The view that style was a philosophy system problem was defended by other scholars as well. Hermann Noack⁵⁵ is one example, and the aforementioned art historian Ludwig Coellen another. According to Coellen, the ‘theory of art is a philosophical discipline, and its basic concept (style) can be justified using transcendental logic.’⁵⁶ He thought a universal theory of style (‘eine allgemeine Stiltheorie’) would enable the use of basic theoretical concepts in the specific study of art history based on the hypothetical ‘construction of the equivalence of the concepts of world and art form’.⁵⁷ Thus Coellen transformed Hegel’s (Riegl’s parallel and Dvořák’s expressionist) conception of style as the manifest form of an epochal world view into a practical theoretical construction.

Efforts to produce a conceptual system reached their height in the work of the German theorist and art historian Paul Frankl (1878–1962). Considering style to be the ideal ‘regulative’,⁵⁸ and history of style to be the ‘ideal typical auxiliary construction’,⁵⁹ Frankl distinguished three types of style: ‘der Figuralstil’, ‘der kompositive Stil’, and ‘der Qualitätstil’.⁶⁰ Later, he would make the binary ‘total–partiell’ the basic polarity of style and distinguished between ‘Seinsstil(e)’ and ‘Werdensstil(e)’. He considered style to be a ‘purely aesthetic concept’ and identified five style types, or ‘principles of formal unity’, within it: ‘der figurale’, ‘der visinale’, ‘der ordinale’, ‘der dividuale’, and ‘der harmoniale Stil’.⁶¹ Frankl considered the deductive ‘system of art history’, including a style typology, to be the

⁵² HEINZ 1986 (see in note 16), p. 63.

⁵³ UTTIZ, E.: *Was ist Stil?* Stuttgart 1911.

⁵⁴ HEINZ 1986 (see in note 16), p. 58.

⁵⁵ NOACK, H.: Vom Wesen des Stils I: Der Stilbegriff als Problem der philosophischen Systematik. In: *Die Akademie*, 2, 1925, pp. 117–182.

⁵⁶ COELLEN, L.: *Der Stil in der bildenden Kunst. Allgemeine Stiltheorie und geschichtliche Studien dazu*. Darmstadt 1921, p. 1. This is why Coellen’s theory of style was labelled transcendental. PASSARGE 1930 (see in note 30), p. 69.

⁵⁷ COELLEN 1924 (see in note 44), reprint Mittenwald 1979, pp. 32–33.

⁵⁸ DITTMANN 1967 (see in note 23), p. 122.

⁵⁹ HALBERTSMA 1992 (see in note 32), p. 93.

⁶⁰ FRANKL, P.: Stilgattungen und Stilarten. In: *Zeitschrift für Ästhetik und allgemeine Kunstwissenschaft*, 19, 1925, pp. 101–112.

⁶¹ FRANKL, P.: *Das System der Kunstwissenschaft*. Brünn 1938, pp. 32–38, 279. See also the posthumous publication of FRANKL, P.: *Zu Fragen des Stils*. Leipzig 1988.

ideal ‘norm of historical development’, capturing ‘the possible’ or as ‘the scaffolding’ of historical events.⁶² But what Frankl’s conceptual specification and systematization failed to do was remove the ambiguities in the concept of style.⁶³ His proposed system of art history and style typology was not widely adopted in the practice of art history.

X. Attempts at paradigmatic change

At the turn of the 1920s and 1930s, the increasingly abstract nature of the concept of style led the upcoming generation of Viennese historians to critique the abstractness of the history of style.⁶⁴ The leading representative of the Vienna School structuralists, Hans Sedlmayr (1896–1984), focused his attention not on the concept of style but on the structure of the work in question. Riegl’s concepts of ‘Stilcharakter – Stilprinzip’, expressing the relationship between the external manifestation and the internal principle, were cast aside in favour of ‘external and internal style’ (‘ausserer’ – ‘innerer Stil’), or the ‘style’ – ‘structural principle’ (‘Stil’ – ‘Strukturprinzipien’). Style ceased to be supraindividualist and became the external expression of the deeper, internal structural principle of the work.⁶⁵

A more radical attempt to change the style paradigm without questioning the substance of style was made by Julius von Schlosser (1866–1938), who taught the Vienna School structuralists. He abandoned the anonymous, depersonalized under-

standing of style and returned to a humanistic individualistic conception of ‘art history as the history of artists’ (Vasari). Schlosser understood style to be the creative work of important artistic individuals but did not narrow it down to the mere expression of the subject. One could say that Schlosser’s was a modernized version of Kant’s idea that geniuses create the rules of art. Schlosser juxtaposed style as creative expression (as ‘art’) with cultural communication. On this oppositional basis – timeless artistic work versus historical document – he drew a dividing line between the history of style as the history of timeless, artistic geniuses, known as ‘Stilgeschichte’ (i.e. ‘Kunstlergeschichte im höchsten Sinn’) and its uncreative dissemination – ‘linguistic history’ (‘Sprachgeschichte’).⁶⁶

Another version of the two-pronged theory of style was proposed by the French art historian Henri Focillon (1881–1943) in the mid-1930s.⁶⁷ Like Viollet-le-Duc before him, who separated style from form and distinguished ‘style absolu’ from ‘style relatif’,⁶⁸ and like Heinrich Wölfflin, who had proposed a double-root theory of style (principle and expression), Focillon divided Winckelmann’s dual entity of the essence of art and its history into a timeless and a historical component.⁶⁹ But unlike Von Schlosser he did not juxtapose style with non-style (style with language), but drew a distinction between style in general and a style in the singular,⁷⁰ that is, between style as a transhistoric phenomenon and a style as a historical phenomenon. For Focillon, style was ‘absolute’, the height of

⁶² HALBERTSMA 1992 (see in note 32), p. 99; FRANKL 1938 (see in note 61), p. 1040.

⁶³ ELKINS, J.: Style. In: *The Dictionary of Art*, vol. 29. Ed.: TURNER, J. London 1996, p. 876.

⁶⁴ According to Sedlmayr: ‘Kunstwissenschaft ist bisher... in ihrer Ausführung allzu einseitig Stilgeschichte geworden.’ SEDLMAYR, H.: Zu einer strengen Kunstwissenschaft, 1931. In: SEDLMAYR, H.: *Kunst und Wahrheit. Zur Theorie und Methode der Kunstgeschichte*. Hamburg 1958, p. 52.

⁶⁵ SEDLMAYR, H.: Die Quintessenz der Lehren Riegls, 1929, pp. XIX–XXI: ‘Der “Stil” ist abhängige Variable der inneren Strukturprinzipien.’ Reprint in SEDLMAYR 1958 (see in note 64), p. 21.

⁶⁶ SCHLOSSER, J. von: ‘Stilgeschichte’ und ‘Sprachgeschichte’ der bildenden Kunst. In: *Sitzungsberichte der Bayerischen Akademie der Wissenschaften. Philosophisch-historische Abteilung*, 1935, no. 1, pp. 3–39.

⁶⁷ FOCILLON, H.: *Vie des formes*. Paris 1934. See also FOCILLON, H.: Sur la notion du style. In: *Actes du XIIIe Congrès international d’histoire de l’art*. Stockholm 1933, p. 300 ff. On Focillon’s understanding of style see DUCI, A. M.: A propos du style chez Focillon, lecture at *Le style* conference, INHA, Paris, 25 April 2003.

⁶⁸ CARQUÉ 2004 (see in note 24), p. 126.

⁶⁹ MÜLLER 1981 (see in note 1), p. 145.

⁷⁰ ‘le style’ – ‘un style’.

artistic quality and a timeless value, whereas styles had variable qualities, an evolutionary path, and a consistent singularity of form with an ever-evolving harmony. In other words, Focillon's concept of style was built on the dual timelessness of art and historical variability.⁷¹

XI.

The biological holistic concept

Calls for a return to creative individualism and universalism in the 1930s were unable to prevent growing irrational, nationalist collectivism. National collectivism gave rise to a revival of Hegel's conception of style as the supra-individual expression of the spirit of the epoch and the nation. It brought together his historical relativism and the premise of a constant, national or racial character.⁷² Indeed, even Heinrich Wölfflin accepted the notion that there was a constant national style in his *Italien und das deutsche Formgefühl* published in 1931. Combining formalism with the Romantic idea of the 'last (spiritual) cause of style' he developed the concepts of a 'national sense of form' ('nationale Formgefühl') and a 'national fantasy of form' ('nationale Formphantasie').⁷³ Under the 'Blut und Boden' hegemonic doctrine of the time, the idea of style as an expression of the constant, biologically conditioned character of the nation, tribe, or race acquired geographical dimensions – country(side) ('Landschaft', 'Kunstlandschaft'), landscape (in the artistic sense), or 'land'.

⁷¹ FOCILLON 1934 (see in note 67). Cited in MÜLLER 1981 (see in note 1), pp. 145-156.

⁷² Wilhelm Worringer's interpretation of the concept of style evoked a racial world view. WORRINGER, W.: *Formprobleme der Gotik*. München 1911.

⁷³ CARQUÉ 2004 (see in note 24), p. 136, refers in this context to Wölfflin's concept of 'Volksseele'. See WÖLFFLIN, H. *Italien und das deutsche Formgefühl*. München 1931. On this see SCHLINK, W.: „Ein Volk, eine Zeit, eine Kunst“. Heinrich Wölfflin über das nationale Formgefühl. In: *L'idée du style dans l'historiographie artistique. Variantes nationales et transmissions*. Eds.: FROMMEL, S. – BRUCCULERI, A. Roma 2012, pp. 165-176.

⁷⁴ HALBERTSMA 1992 (see in note 32), pp. 119-127; HELD, J.: Kunstgeschichte im „Dritten Reich“: Wilhelm Pinder und Hans Jantzen an der Münchner Universität. In: *Kunstgeschichte an den Universitäten in Nationalsozialismus (Kunst und*

The ideological doctrine that emerged from equating the biological with the geographic was easily exploited in pursuit of certain political goals, such as to legitimize territorial expansion.

It was Wilhelm Pinder who would combine the essentialist and historical approaches. According to Pinder, national constancy was not an ahistorical, immutable biological essence but the result of historical process. In this sense, it was not the history of styles but of historically shaped art forms and types. It was through these, thought Pinder, that the specific art of the nation emerged along a specific pathway ('Sonderweg'). This then allowed him to interpret the history of German art as a process leading from the dominant political power of rulers to the prevailing economic forces, those connected to the bourgeoisie, and the birth of the national genius, Albrecht Dürer.⁷⁴

The work of the Austrian art historian Hans Sedlmayr was also instrumental in the development of a nationalist conception of a supra-individual style expressing the national character. Sedlmayr's reworking of the concept of 'Reichsstil' combined the doctrine of a collective ethnic style with the idea of political power, and was later used to help legitimize Austria's affiliation with the Third Reich. Moreover, Sedlmayr, a former pupil of Schlosser, attempted to align his 'Reichsstil' with Schlosser's individualist concept of style as the creative expression of a great artist (as exemplified in his work on the Austrian architect Johann Fischer von Erlach).⁷⁵

Politik. Jahrbuch der Guernica Gesellschaft, 5). Eds.: HELD, J. – PAPPENBROCK, M. Göttingen 2003, pp. 17-60, esp. 31 onwards. According to Robert Suckale, Pinder's conception of style can be characterized as 'Stil als Ausdruck der Gesinnung'. SUCKALE, R.: Wilhelm Pinder und die deutsche Kunstwissenschaft nach 1945. In: *Kritische Berichte*, 14, 1986, no. 4, pp. 5-17. Wolfgang Schenkluhn characterized Pinder's conception of style as 'den Ausdruck rassischer Eigenart'. SCHENKLUNH, W.: Bemerkungen zum „Nationalstil“ in der Kunstgeschichte. In: JANTZEN, H.: *Ottomische Kunst*. Berlin 1990, p. 162. According to Jutta Held and Norbert Schneider, for Pinder 'die stilrelevanten Faktoren sind nach seiner Überzeugung letztlich in Nationen und Rassen zu suchen.' HELD, J. – SCHNEIDER, N.: *Grundzüge der Kunstwissenschaft. Gegenstandsbereiche – Institutionen – Problemfelder*. Köln 2007, p. 345.

⁷⁵ SEDLMAYR, H.: Die politische Bedeutung des deutschen Barock. In: *Gesamtdeutschen Vergangenheit. Festgabe für Heinrich*

XII.

The holistic concept in crisis

Following the collapse of the nationalist racist hegemon in 1945, art historians had to confront the tragic consequences of the nationalist art doctrine. The cornerstone of art history lay in ruins. A whole array of art historians joined the search for a way out, including those who had supported the nationalist doctrine.⁷⁶ After 1945, the overriding reaction of German art historians to the critical state of the concept of style was to retreat into the mystic sphere of the irrational in using 'Entelechie', a transcendental entity seen as a harmonious mix of style ('stylistic will') and tradition. Hans Jantzen's (1881–1967) words are symptomatic of this: 'Creating style is a spiritual power... Style, consciously or unconsciously, "selects"... passed down as material according to the needs of the desired style...'.⁷⁷

Hegel's paradigm of a unified period of style survived and resonated in *Gothic Architecture and Scholasticism* (1951), the work of the foremost representative of iconology Ernst Panofsky (1892–1968). Panofsky cast aside Hegel's 'Zeitgeist' and Dvořák's 'Weltanschauung' in favour of the non-metaphysical concept of 'mental habit', which would become the ideational source and keystone of the unified period of style.⁷⁸ Later Gerhard Schmidt would assert that

Ritter von Srbik zum 60. Geburtstag; am 10. November 1938. München 1938, pp. 126-140. See LORENZ, H.: Der habsburgische „Reichsstil“ – Mythos und Realität. In: *Künstlerischer Austausch. Akten des XXVIII. Internationalen Kongresses für Kunstgeschichte Berlin 1992*. Berlin 1993, pp. 163-179.

⁷⁶ See for example FREY, D.: *Kunstwissenschaftliche Grundfragen: Prolegomena zu einer Kunstphilosophie*. Wien 1946. Frey firmly located the cause of the 'critical state of the problem of style' in the conceptual confusion arising from the 'dual meaning' of style, that is, the typologically incoherent concepts of style. Its critical state was thought to be the outcome of a process whereby it was initially identified as period-specific ('Periodenbezeichnung'), then a timeless principle of form ('Formcharakter') that was gradually applied to all art types and to entire epochs until becoming the expression of the unity life of an epoch ('Lebenseinheit einer Zeit'). This raised the question of who or what was the bearer of this unified style ('eigentliche Träger der Stileinheit') and the answer was the idea, then culture and finally human society – tribe, nation, or race. Consequently the concept of a unified style began fragmenting into four style dialects before losing all coherence.

it was the abuse of the history of style by nationalist ideology that had been largely to blame for the loss of confidence in the history of style, whilst simultaneously contesting the viability of the 'holistic concept of style'.⁷⁹

Frederick Antal (1887–1954) was another scholar who, after the second world war, heavily criticized Hegel's holistic conception of style as the homogenous expression of the spirit of an epoch and a nation for having led to the racial interpretation of style in the 1930s and 1940s.⁸⁰ But he did so without casting doubt on its expressive core. Antal rejected the idea of a uniform period style (national or racial), favouring a Marxist version of a plurality of styles that reflected the class structure of society. Pinder's simultaneous pluralism in generational style had been the first biologically based attempt to question the notion of a unified period of style and Antal's was the second, but his was a sociological attempt to do away with the idea of a unified style and replace it with individual styles. It was an attempt that built on the idea of the simultaneous existence of social classes. For Antal, styles expressed the world view and social status of particular classes. In this sense, style pluralism was the simultaneous existence of multiple class-contingent world views: 'Various styles within a single period were deeply embedded within the world views and the social and political condi-

⁷⁷ JANTZEN, H.: Tradition und Stil in der abendländischen Kunst. In: JANTZEN, H.: *Über den gotischen Kirchenraum und andere Aufsätze*. Berlin 1951; the citations are from the edition published in 2000, pp. 115-129: 'Die Stilschöpfung ist eine geistige Macht... Der Stil „wählt“... das Überlieferbare als Materie, bewusst oder unbewusst, nach Massgabe des dem eigenen Stilwillen Förderlichen... Fragt man nach dem Wesen echter Stilbildungen... so sind „Stile“ als Entelechien zu kennzeichnen.'

⁷⁸ CARQUÉ 2004 (see in note 24), p. 142.

⁷⁹ SCHMIDT, G.: *Gotische Bildwerke und ihre Meister*. Wien – Köln – Weimar 1992, chapter 'Probleme der Begriffsbildung', p. 318: Schmidt referred to it as the ideological servitude of art in nationalism 'Missbrauch, der gewiss viel dazu beigetragen hat die Stilgeschichte in Verruf zu bringen' and '„holistische Stilbegriff“ in Frage gestellt worden'.

⁸⁰ ANTAL, F.: *Florentine Painting and Its Social Background*. London 1947.

tions of the era.⁸¹ But in 1953, Meyer Schapiro's (1904–1996) seminal essay 'Style' was published,⁸² which led to the culmination of the debate on style and the opening of a new chapter.

In conclusion it should be emphasized that the distrust that the concept of style attracted, caused not only by the growing conceptual chaos but also by the above mentioned consequences of the hegemony of the biological version of metaphysical expressivism, was not definitively removed. The scepticism persisted, in part because of the modernist use of style as a unique entity in contrast to

traditionalism. Even in 1964, in his introductory lecture to the international art history congress in Bonn, the German art historian Herbert von Einem (1905–1983) thought it necessary to justify the harmony of style and tradition.⁸³ Significantly, he used the concept of style to do that, presenting it not as an expression of historicity but as the timeless essence of art. That is, as a thing that persists throughout history – tradition. The adherence to the humanistic respect of tradition as represented by iconology is clear here.

(English translation by Catriona Menzies)

⁸¹ ANTAL, F.: Bemerkungen zur Methode der Kunstgeschichte (1948). In: ANTAL, F.: *Zwischen Renaissance und Romantik. Studien zur Kunstgeschichte*. Dresden 1966, p. 10. On this see WESSELY, A.: Die Aufhebung des Stilbegriffs – Frederick Antals Rekonstruktion künstlerischer Entwicklungen auf marxistischer Grundlage. In: *Kritische Berichte*, 4, 1976, no. 2-3, pp. 16-37.

⁸² Originally published in *Anthropology Today*. Ed.: KROEBER, A. L. Chicago 1953.

⁸³ See EINEM, H. von: Stil und Überlieferung in der Kunst des Abendlandes. In: *Stil und Überlieferung in der Kunst des Abendlandes. Akten des 21. Internationalen Kongresses für Kunstgeschichte (Bonn 1964)*, vol. I. Berlin 1967. 'Wir können Stil die jeweilige Verwirklichung der Kunst nennen.' Ibidem, p. 4.

Looking for the Concept of Style (1753–1953)

Résumé

This study maps changes in perceptions of the concept of style from the second half of the eighteenth century to the end of the Second World War. Comte Buffon had already come up with the anthropocentric notion that style was the man (1753), but it was J. J. Winckelmann who would fundamentally shape style discourse. He brushed aside the traditional concept of style as a timeless artistic norm and embraced the notion that style was a historically evolving phenomenon. This was the dawn of art history as a history of style. In the Romantic era, style was understood to mean expression and, in the Hegelian version, the expression of the spirit of the epoch. The counter-reaction to Romantic spiritualism emerged in the period of materialist determinism and historicism, when style was posited as a rhetorical tool determined by its materials and purpose, or function (Von Rumohr, G. Semper). Then, under the influence of modernism and the notion of autonomous art, the style came to be seen as the autonomous principle of the form ('Kunstwollen') and immanent development (A. Riegl, H. Wölfflin). But not even formalism could prevent the rise of Hegelian expressionism: either in the idea that style represented the worldview of the time (A. Riegl), or in the notion of the double root of style (H. Wölfflin). After the first world war, the search for the identity of style intensified. Various proponents of general art history ('allgemeine Kunstwissenschaft') joined in the debate on the essence of style. The style was also interrogated as a philosophical problem. The discussants were convinced that any ambiguities in the concept of style could be resolved by producing a more precise definition of the term.

Ultimately though, their attempts at clarifying the concept of style by specifying the various types of style simply led to the creation of an overly complex style typology (P. Frankl) that in fact obscured style's essence. By the late 1920s, however, the basic premise of stylistic history had been relativized – the premise of homogenous epochs of style. This was then rejected by W. Pinder, who propagated the idea that three generations of style existed simultaneously. By the first half of the 1930s, various attempts were being made to change the style paradigm: to replace the notion of supra-individual stylistic history with the idea of the structure of the work of art (H. Sedlmayr). Stylistic history ('Stilgeschichte') was interpreted as being the product of the individual artist in contrast to the dissemination of linguistic history ('Sprachgeschichte', J. von Schlosser). These attempts to come up with an individualistic notion of style were, however, immediately quashed by the onset of the new supra-individualist collectivism – in which stylistic history was seen as expressing the constant character of the nation, ethnicity, race. The collapse of hegemonic nationalism led to a crisis in the holistic notion of the history of style. Several prominent German art historians thought metaphysics offered a way out (H. Jantzen's concept of style as *entelechie*). Other scholars were reluctant to give up entirely on the holistic concept of style, viewing it in sociological terms (the Marxist reduplication of the class structure of society, F. Antal), or as the intellectual 'habitus' of the era (E. Panofsky). But at that moment American and English scholars joined the debate on style, shaping its character for many decades to come.