

Heinrich Gomperz, 'Ueber einige psychologische Voraussetzungen der naturalistischen Kunst'

Translated with introduction by Karl Johns

Heinrich Gomperz within the Mosaic of Viennese Academia

Heinrich Gomperz was born in Vienna in 1873 and died in Los Angeles in 1942. He first studied law and history in Vienna and Berlin but completed his dissertation under Ernst Mach in Vienna (*Zur Psychologie der logischen Grundtatsachen*, 1896). After a period of teaching in Switzerland, he was called to the University in Vienna as Privatdozent and later becoming professor in a field similar to his father Theodor (1832-1912) who had been a popular professor of ancient philosophy and member of the academy of sciences there through a period that was unusually rich for epistemology and the arts.

Some of his energies were taken up in furthering the work of his father, and aside from editing correspondence which extended back to the earlier 19th century and includes letters from the English Utilitarians, he kept the standard reference work *Griechische Denker* in print.¹ While moving in the circle of Moritz Schlick, he associated with the likes of Karl Bühler, Victor Kraft, Hans Hahn, Rudolf Carnap and Herbert Feigl. He became a teacher of Karl Popper who himself typically returned to earlier Greek philosophy throughout his life. In his own work, Gomperz diverged from the better known trend of logical positivism by his interest in the role of individual character and personality. This probably also played a part in his interest in the psychoanalysis of Sigmund Freud and his sometime lapse into psychologism.

During this period in which the dogma of positivism was in some ways overcome, and various disciplines in the humanities were discovered and developed, some of the personal sympathies among these university scholars are more elusive to discern than the overt differences. Within the teachings of the philosophical faculty of the university, Heinrich Gomperz would have been striking as a philosopher with an interest in history, and this is likely to have provided a basis for his friendship with Julius Schlosser - who to the end of his days defended the aims of the Institut für Geschichtsforschung, maintained an active interest in other subjects, but was also unusually animated by questions of logic and aesthetics.

When Gomperz approached the question of naturalism in art, the general interest in Vienna in the history of art and its theoretical foundations was once described as 'endemic,' but aside from the regular public lectures in the Österreichisches Museum, this atmosphere did not leave the same trace in the other fields. This accounts for some of the significance of the theory presented here in

¹ Theodor Gomperz, *Griechische Denker*, Ausgabe letzter Hand besorgt von Heinrich Gomperz, Berlin Leipzig: de Gruyter vol. 1-3, 1922, 1925, 1931.

translation. It was here that Gomperz introduced the example of the toy horse which Schlosser used in his own essays, and then became best known through the influential volume by Ernst Gombrich. The young Ernst Gombrich was also presumably aware of the work of Gomperz.

A few pages of typically succinct 'Autobiographical Remarks' were published shortly after his death.² During his final years in the United States he very naturally lectured and wrote slightly more about immediate practical and political questions, considered the problems that were in the air, and expressed a feeling of reaction against his own earlier political position from the period of the economic depression.

In Vienna he would have been known for a number of characteristics beyond his unquestioned authority in the field of ancient philosophy. His social-democratic sympathies ultimately led to his dismissal in 1934, and in the previous decades, his friendship with Sigmund Freud and his interest and participation in psychoanalysis would have been striking within the conservative society outside of the university as well as within it. He both published in the journal *Imago* ('Psychologische Betrachtungen an griechischen Philosophen', vol. 10. 1, 1924, pp. 1-92) and lectured publicly on the significance of Freudian theory for the humanities ('Freuds Bedeutung für die Geisteswissenschaften,' *Medizinische Klinik*, 1931, no. 24, pp. 1-10). Among his academic colleagues this was interpreted by some as a temporary lapse into the very psychologism which had always interested but been avoided by Schlosser.³ A refinement of his theory surrounding the role of the emotions must have been written in the final volumes of his voluminous *Weltanschauungslehre*.⁴ Although he is known to have finished at least one more volume, he preferred not to publish it and a manuscript has not been found.

In a time when most of the university faculty were the children of middle class bureaucrats and tradespeople, he was among the only figures who could look back upon an intellectual family tradition in ancient languages and philosophy reaching into the 17th century.⁵ When he escaped Vienna with his family library,

² First published in *Luminar* vol, 6, no. 1, pp. 1-19, in *The Personalist*, Summer 1943, pp. 154-270, and then reprinted in Heinrich Gomperz, *Philosophical Studies*, Boston: Christopher Publishing House 1953, pp. 15-28. The latter includes a list of his publications compiled by his widow, op. cit., pp. 280-283. Further details about the family can be found in *Theodor Gomperz Ein Gelehrtenleben im Bürgertum der Franz-Josefs-Zeit Auswahl seiner Briefe und Aufzeichnungen, 1869 - 1912*, erläutert und zu einer Darstellung seines Lebens verknüpft von Heinrich Gomperz. Neubearbeitet und herausgegeben von Robert A. Kann, Sitzungsberichte Österreichische Akademie der Wissenschaften Philosophisch-Historische Klasse 295, Veröffentlichungen der Kommission für Geschichte der Erziehung und des Unterrichts 14, Vienna: Verlag der Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften 1974, and also *Philology and Philosophy The letters of Hermann Diels to Theodor and Heinrich Gomperz (1871-1922)* edited by Maximilian Braun, Hildesheim: Weidmann 1995.

³ As for instance by Karl Popper, *Unended Quest An Intellectual Autobiography*, La Salle: Open Court 1976, p. 75.

⁴ *Weltanschauungslehre Ein Versuch die Hauptprobleme der allgemeinen theoretischen Philosophie geschichtlich zu entwickeln und sachlich zu bearbeiten*, Volume 1 *Methodologie*, Volume 2,1 *Noologie*, Jena Leipzig: Eugen Diederichs 1905, 1908.

⁵ Robert A. Kann op. cit., as in note 2 provides information about their 19th century intellectual and social life as well as bibliographical (pp. 527-530) and biographical detail (pp. 35-36), including an index of correspondents.

Karl Johns

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their papers and correspondence, it became an unhappy milestone in Austrian intellectual history.

Karl Johns completed his doctorate in the history of art at the Fogg Art Museum, and has worked with the Dallas Museum of Art, the Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam, the Museum für Kunst und Gewerbe in Hamburg, and the Los Angeles County Museum of Art among others. His publications have centred on the art of the Netherlands in the early modern period and the earlier Viennese art historians.

Karl Johns
270 Goins Court
Riverside CA 92507

KarlTJohns@aol.com

Heinrich Gomperz, 'On Some of the Psychological Conditions of Naturalistic Art'

Translated and edited by Karl Johns ¹

I.

In the earliest centuries of the common era, there was no objection raised more often by the Christian apologists against the pagans than that of image worship. They called out their opponents with the accusation that you worship wood and stone, your gods are fabricated by craftsmen, you worship your own creations! I believe that no response to this has survived from the pagans. Yet instead of such a reaction from the pagans, those defenses of imagery ('Bilderverehrung') are preserved which the Christians themselves brought forth just a few centuries later and then repeated ever since. They were forced to do this since they had taken over this form of worship. The pagans must already have answered that such an objection is based on a misunderstanding: we are not worshipping the images, but the deities which these images depict; the image only denotes the place, and gives us the occasion to turn to the god with offerings and prayers. If one were to calmly and impartially analyze the reasons for this objection as against this responsibility, then one would be forced to conclude that both are highly lopsided. It is certain that to somebody showing homage to an image, this image represents more than simply a piece of wood, stone or metal in a given shape. This would already be clear from the fact that the same person would not be moved to turn to it with offerings or entreaties if he saw it as one among many in the workshop of a wood carver, sculptor or in a foundry. It is also equally certain that it represents more to them than simply an extrinsic sign for the honor of a spiritual entity ('*Verehrung eines geistigen Wesens*'); that the image has a completely different meaning for him than if it had a sign reading 'It is proper to honor Athena here.' Nobody standing before such a sign would be moved to raise his hands, to decorate it with a peplos or precious stones; and nobody would be moved to make a vow before the Artemis of Ephesus if the image at this particular place bore no more differences of quality than such inscribed signs would. There can be no doubt that the person honoring the image feels that he is grasping the deity or the hero in the image and through it, and yet there can be no doubt as to the difference between the two.

This introduction should make it clear to us that this is by no means a simple and transparent psychological situation. I shall attempt to state it more precisely.

¹ [Originally published as 'Ueber einige psychologische Voraussetzungen der naturalistischen Kunst', *Beilage der Allgemeinen Zeitung*, Jahrgang 1905, Nummer 160, München Freitag 14. Juli, pp. 89-93, Nummer 161, Samstag 15. Juli, pp. 98-101.]

The image admits of being conceived in two ways. The one was that of the worshipper before an image (*Bilderverehrer*). For him the image represents a synthesis of the figure depicted and of the god being depicted. More precisely: it is the deity to him; of course not the deity itself as it would appear 'face to face'; nevertheless the same deity which might be confronted in other pictures or in a revelation without an image. In a word: for the worshipper, the image is the deity depicted. The other conception was that of the iconoclast. For him the image is in no sense the depicted deity. It might recall it or even have a similarity. It is nonetheless simply a piece of wood, stone or cast metal in a given shape. In a word: for the iconoclast, the image represents the figure of something.

These observations circumscribe a very interesting psychological problem which has to my knowledge never been studied in particular. We might define it with the following questions: how can a psychological analysis grasp the consciousness of a person to whom an image has the identical significance of its subject? How can this be conceived for a person for whom the image and its maker are inseparable? How about the change in conception leading from the one and the other? Before proceeding to deal with these questions it is necessary to first ascertain that this relates to more than merely this particular situation.

To start with, this bears on the entire field of the visual arts. In attending a performance of Julius Caesar, I would normally consider myself to be facing Caesar and Brutus. Of course not Caesar and Brutus themselves, face to face, but 'represented' precisely by the persons acting on the stage; yet these are the same Caesar and same Brutus being discussed in the dramatic declamations, the Caesar who ruled over Rome and the Brutus who killed him. In these circumstances, to me, the person acting on the stage becomes the figure they depict; the 'dramatic illusion' definitely corresponds to the conscious tendency of the person worshipping before an image (*Bewußtseinshabitus des Bilderverehrer's*). And yet the habit of the iconoclast is also mirrored here precisely. This other conception becomes a reality to me as soon as the person acting on the stage no longer means Caesar or Brutus to me, but appears simply as the actor wearing the relevant costume and make up. When the 'dramatic illusion' is 'destroyed' in this way, it no longer makes a difference to be reminded that this actor might have had his mask made according to the very best portraits of Caesar and his costume made according to the best available descriptions of Roman dress. This might still cause the man on the stage to remind me of Caesar; but in spite of this he is then nothing more to me than the actor playing the part.

Works of visual art are no different. When I see the photograph of an acquaintance, I normally have the feeling of being in their presence. As soon as I recognize it, I say 'This is so and so!' I do not believe that I am facing so and so himself, but rather the person I know in daily life, whose character appears to me in a certain way, and with whom I might share certain common interests, inclinations or aversions. In this again, what I see represents the person himself. Here again the

same shift in conceptions can occur and leave me with nothing other than a piece of cardboard including an interplay of light and dark: no longer the person depicted but a sheet bearing a depiction. What is true of a photograph of a human being is of course also true of visual depictions of other objects in other techniques. The artfully composed painting of a landscape will for instance also strike me once as a painted landscape or as a canvas covered with strokes of color.

This question applies not merely to art, but also to many games. Let us think of the stick which little boys ride on, or the cooking spoon which little girls cradle in their arms. To these children, the stick represents a horse and the spoon a child, while grown ups see nothing in them other than a stick and a spoon. When children treat one another as a father and a mother while the grown up observer sees them only as children playing games, this is the same situation.

Insofar as it also involves the substitution of one person for another, the latter example also recalls the visual arts. Yet the same is generally also true of all examples of legal surrogacy with an action 'in the name of' another person other than the one performing the act. The commissioner represents his employer and the attorney his client, while the judge represents the power of the state just as the ambassador does the monarch. In each of these cases, the actions or experiences of the deputy are viewed as if they were performed by or affected the person being represented: not by the represented individual 'themselves,' but nonetheless by the person who might have done so themselves or chosen another to act in their place. It is simple to imagine another notion which fundamentally negates this relationship, and cannot imagine how a monarch can be offended by something done to his ambassador thousands of miles away.

The same point of view is apparent not merely in actions by proxy, but also in other legal, religious and formal deeds. For a naïve person, it appears that a prince gains a certain power and authority by his coronation, or that a catechumen is liberated of sins by baptism. A critical viewer might consider nothing more to be occurring than a heavy and shiny object being put on the head or a small amount of water being sprayed across the body – for the other, the symbol gains the significance of that being symbolized and they participate in the process of symbolism. The same is true of other symbols, including those of customs and daily life, no less than in legal and religious actions. Flags, medals, widow's weeds, kisses, bowing – for most people, all of these objects and actions 'represent' honor, respect, mourning, affection, or esteem. It is equally possible to conceive of them as 'insignificant' – as an old rag, shiny pieces of metal, colorful strips of cloth, pointless gestures and poses. The latter attitude was that assumed by the Cynics in antiquity, who could not often enough emphasize that they could see through the *τύφος*, the hollow delusions and mere conventions. Our own time is also not lacking in exponents of such a shallow enlightenment. Such a view that the person considering symbols to be meaningless must be superior to those for whom they have 'meaning'

could be quite bewildering if we did not have the evidence of art or of our following observations.

I must finally mention two relationships which far surpass the others in their theoretical importance, but which we cannot discuss in lieu of the question we have presently posed ourselves. To attempt a resolution of these things, as I hope to do elsewhere, it would require expanding this brief sketch into an entire system of theoretical philosophy.² This is the relationship of ideas to objects and of speech to meaning. In this case we also believe we grasp something with our idea of it; not the object 'itself' but the same object which we have grasped by way of other notions. Our experience is itself attached to that object. The 'idealist' by contrast views this as nothing more than a given state of consciousness, so that the same experience appears to him as nothing more than a 'non-objective' notion (*'eine "gegenstandslose" Vorstellung'*). We further underscore the similarity of this example with those mentioned earlier in using the term image (*'Bild'*). For the average person, the statement conveys an objective fact (*'Sachverhalt'*). This is not identical with the fact itself, which it after all only 'signifies' (*'eben nur "bedeutet"'*); nevertheless it represents the same state of things (*'Sachverhalt'*) that can be generally expressed in other languages or be seen directly. The 'nominalist' by contrast would interpret the same statement as nothing more than a cluster of tones which might recall a given state of things (*'Sachverhalt'*), but which remains completely independent of it. The rest of us are also able to experience the latter approach ourselves: we have to do no more than to concentrate on the sound of a sequence of words until it appears to us first as a flat and disembodied 'apparition', and finally dissolves into nothing more than a tune conveying a mood, with the words nothing more than an aimless sequence of sounds. Yet, as I have said, we cannot linger or go any further than allude to these two cases presently. As for the other cases we have mentioned, we must move from posing the problem to answering the psychological questions they raise.

Such a study can begin with a simple consideration. The picture as image of something (*'Abgebildetes'*) and the picture as the source or vehicle of an image (*'Abbildendes'*) represent two distinct conceptions; they must correspond to two completely distinct complexes of psychological elements. As far as the facts of the visual perception and association, the sensual qualities of the picture, there is no difference in what occurs in either of these: its colors, surfaces etc. are completely identical for the iconoclast and the worshipper. The difference is also not possibly due to the fact that the worshipper consciously associates other ideas (*'Vorstellungen'*) with the subject matter of the image in a sort of amalgam of associations (*'"Assoziation von Vorstellungen"'*). We have already stressed more than once: that the iconoclast might equally well be reminded of the deity itself by its

² This is my intention in Heinrich Gomperz, *Weltanschauungslehre*, volumes two and three [*Weltanschauungslehre Ein Versuch die Hauptprobleme der allgemeinen theoretischen Philosophie geschichtlich zu entwickeln und sachlich zu bearbeiten*, Jena: Eugen Diederichs 1905-1908].

mere image, and yet this does not make him an image worshipper. When I see a boy playing on a toy horse, I might after all myself be reminded of a real horse: this does not mean that the stick has become a reality to me to the extent to which it has for the child. The function of the image does not involve a tangency of parallels, but rather a co-mingling of the image and its subject matter (*'ein Ineinander von Abbildendem und Abgebildeten'*). Such an interpenetration cannot be the result of a mere addition of the conception of the visual subject to that of the visual object (*'dem Abbildenden von dem Abgebildeten'*). If this difference of psychological elements cannot be explained as a difference in conceptions, then it can only be due to a difference in psychological elements not attached to the subject of sensual impressions, and yet still essentially properties of our conception of the objects.

What sort of elements are these? This is a question on which the great schools of epistemology disagree. These elements have been explained as 'Gestalt qualities', 'judgements', as 'categories' or other 'acts'. I have discussed this at great length elsewhere.³ Perhaps I can be indulged to express my personal opinion here. It seems that our consciousness of objects is composed of two elements: receptive states of consciousness or ideas (*'Vorstellungen'*), and reactive states of consciousness or feelings. To recognize a lion as a lion it is necessary that I see its color and possibly also feel its body for the texture; on the other hand, I must also project onto the lion the unique sense of my own bodily structure, tension and articulation of the joints which I feel in myself. In a similar way, I must sense that it is capable of great physical achievements, running, jumping or chewing; I must sense its possible dangerousness with a feeling either of caution or fear, and also be conscious of its beauty, accompanied by a feeling of pleasure or admiration. According to the attitude we take most often, the psychological elements of the first can be taken as such received through the senses from the external objects, but this can never be true of those for the second. With these feelings we react against the sensual material which we perceive in these ideas (*'Vorstellungen'*); and it is precisely through this reaction that we form these materials into objects. And thus, both are necessary for the perception of an object, or as we might also say, for the impression we receive from it: it is a complex of ideas and a complex of feelings. I should like to denote the first as the ideas of an impression (*'Eindrucksvorstellung'*) and the latter as the emotions arising from an impression (*'Eindrucksgefühl'*).

Before returning to our question, it is necessary to make another observation. Apparently, the emotions attached to the impression are not bound to the individual ideas from the impression but rather to their concept (*'Inbegriff'*). It is only the complete lion which is capable of jumping or instilling us with fear, but this cannot be effected by its color or texture alone. In normal cases, the emotions from the impression might remain relatively constant while the concomitant ideas can vary quite broadly. For instance if the lion were to assume a completely different color in the course of its life, it would still remain alive, capable of all of the

³ Heinrich Gomperz, *Weltanschauungslehre*, [as in note 2] volume 1.

aforementioned qualities, and still present us with danger. In an objectivist mode of thought, our impressions of the object would bear no weight, but instead only the ideas related to the impression, the variable qualities of the item. From what we have said, according to this mode of thought, the complex of our emotions attached to the impression become the constant support or armature for these variable qualities – what in the common jargon of metaphysics would be called a substance. To put it in another way: for psychology, the variable qualities of an object are represented by the ideas arising from our impressions ('*Eindrucksvorstellungen*'); its lasting substance by the complex of our emotional associations ('*Eindrucksgefühle*'); finally, the inherence of the qualities in the substance are represented by the embedding of those ideas in this complex of emotions. Just as metaphysics judges the identity of an object according to the persistence of its substance without regard for the shifting nature of its qualities, it follows from this that psychology will judge this identity according to the consistency of the emotions generated by the impression ('*Eindrucksgefühle*') without regard for the variability of the accompanying ideas ('*Eindrucksvorstellungen*').

I am aware that such a derivation must make a somewhat disconcerting impression when it is torn out of context as it is here.⁴ Perhaps this strangeness can be assuaged somewhat if I summarize the conclusions as far as they are relevant to us presently. It became apparent that when we form a conception of an object, this involves ideas as well as feelings which emerge from our impression ('*Eindrucksvorstellungen und Eindrucksgefühle*'); these ideas become embedded within the emotions in a singular manner; the object retains its identity for us as long as the emotional impression remains constant while the associated ideas might change. When metaphysics allows for the shifting qualities of an object to remain inherent in its substance, it corresponds to this psychological fact.

Let us return to the question of how visual imagery is understood. We recall that the attitude of those condoning the religious use of images and the iconoclasts cannot be distinguished according to the ideas arising from the impression ('*Eindrucksvorstellungen*') – the sensual data available to both as viewers of the image remains identical. We might now continue and add that it must follow from this that the two experience different emotions arising from the same impression. When the image of a deity is interpreted as the god by the worshipper but a marble representation to the iconoclast, then the former must be seeing the perceptual qualities of the image as they must be embedded in a complex of emotional impressions ('*Eindrucksgefühle*') as felt in the presence of a deity. Within the consciousness of the other, the same qualities are embedded among the feelings from the impression as one normally feels them before a piece of marble. It is a simple matter to schematically indicate what sort of emotions these are. A piece of marble is a heavy, dead and inanimate object. A deity is a self propelled, living,

⁴ A more extensive discussion can be found in Heinrich Gomperz, *Weltanschauungslehre*, [as in note 2] 615, Volume 1, pp. 117ff.

influential being. For this reason we associate feelings of weight and rigidity with the former, and feel indifferent toward it. The latter awakens feelings of activity and agency, giving us a sense of hope and fear, as well as adulation and confidence. Nothing could be more natural than for two differing impressions or conceptions to arise from this, even if the same image can evoke one group of emotions as well as another. To recognize this is the key to understanding the phenomenon that interests us here. For a better understanding, we must nevertheless make some further observations.

First of all – in the consciousness of the image worshipper, the ideas from the impressions of the image (*'Eindrucksvorstellungen'*) are embedded in the emotional impressions of the depicted deity. Translated into the language of metaphysics, this would mean that for the worshipper before an image, the substance of the deity is inherent in the qualities of the image. This would be the strictly technical expression for the 'synthesis' of the subject and object of the image (*'Abbildendem und Abgebildeten'*), as it had presented itself to us as a problem. There is however another aspect to this. We have already heard that the constancy of the impressed feelings (*'Eindrucksgefühle'*) or the substance includes the identity of the object. Since this would mean that the substance of this image would agree with others of the same deity, and since the impressed feelings of both also concur with the feelings of the iconoclast, it follows that for the worshipper before the image, the deity is in fact 'the same' as that depicted in all of its other images as well as that to which the prayers of an iconoclast would be directed. Yet the identity had also been problematic to us. Meanwhile there is another point to be made. Even if the worshipper might believe the image to be identical with the existing deity, they will nonetheless realize that it includes individual qualities not relevant in and of themselves – for they conceive of the deity as neither white nor solid nor silent. These differences to our ideas arising from the impression (*'Eindrucksvorstellungen'*) as we normally associate them with the deity would become conscious as a feeling of indirectness, leading us to predicate 'Not the object itself!' This is the feeling underlying that conception of the image which we previously expressed as allowing the worshipper before the image of the deity – the same which they otherwise revere - to conceive this as not being the deity 'itself' but rather as something substituting or symbolizing it, its representation.

The following three points strike me as characteristic for the conception of imagery among those who admit it in worship. The impressed ideas from the image of the deity (*'Eindrucksvorstellungen'*) are embedded within the emotions arising from the same impression (*'Eindrucksgefühle'*), or spoken metaphysically, the qualities of the image are inherent in the substance of the deity. These feelings are identical with those felt before the deity itself; then a feeling of mediation or indirectness deriving from the differences between the qualities of the images and those of the deity. These three points are the basis for its three essential predicates: the image is the

deity; the same deity perceived also in other images; and yet it is not deity itself, but rather its representation.

In the consciousness of the iconoclast, the ideas emerging from the impression of the image are embedded in the feelings generated by its impression, or stated metaphysically, the pictorial qualities are inherent in the substance of a piece of marble which is formed in a particular way. The emotions arising from the impression are as different from those surrounding other images as this particular image is different from all of the others, and of course their difference is all the greater in relation to the feelings related to the deity. The figure of the image does however generate a feeling of immediacy since its actual qualities are being perceived. It is on the basis of these three facts of consciousness that the iconoclast finds his three statements: the image is nothing beyond the representation of a figure; this is as distinct from the deity itself as it is from all other images; and it is identical with this figure 'itself' and not merely a representation of it.

We have seen that the shift between the two conceptions involves a change in the emotions arising from the impression (*'Eindrucksgefühle'*) while the concomitantly arising ideas (*'Eindrucksvorstellungen'*) remain constant, and that this is accompanied by a shift from a feeling of mediation to a feeling of immediacy. For this reason, the statement that 'the image is a representation of a deity' is followed by 'it is the representing figure itself'. The change in the emotions arising from the impression (*'Eindrucksgefühle'*), with the concomitant ideas remaining constant, provides the exact opposite of what we considered the normal case. For we had seen that: normally the feelings remain constant in spite of shifting ideas; and this normal case is described by metaphysics as a shift in qualities belonging to one and the same substance. In this language, our case would sound as follows: changes in the substance while the qualities remain constant – in other words: transubstantiation!

I do not use this word lightly. The Roman Catholic dogma of transubstantiation describes with marvelous clarity what occurs metaphysically when an image is translated from the conception of an iconoclast into that of a worshipper, or generally when an object is turned into a symbol. The impression of bread and wine includes two aspects of consciousness: the image in the imagination (*'Eindrucksvorstellungen'*) of its qualities (its color, texture, taste etc.); and then the emotional impressions (*'Eindrucksgefühle'*) such as death, use, foodstuff of a low order etc. if this bread and wine are turned into symbols of the body and blood of the Lord, then the related ideas (*'Eindrucksvorstellungen'*) do not change at all: color, texture and taste remain constant. It is the related emotions which make a change (*'Eindrucksgefühle'*): something living is made from something inanimate, something with a normal use is turned into something mysterious. Foodstuffs of moderate value are turned into objects of reverence with incomparable holiness. In the language of metaphysics: the qualities remain the same, just as they had been formerly inherent to the substance of bread and wine and are now inherent to the substance of the body and blood of the Lord. And this is exactly the dogma.

Although this has just been explained in the sense of a positive transubstantiation, if the attitude of the iconoclast is translated into that of the worshipper, the reverse process might be described as a negative transubstantiation. We prefer to call this process one of 'de-formation' ("*Entbildung*"). For this is the process which changes that which is represented ('*Abgebildete*') into nothing more than a mere imaging ('*Abbildendes*'), and in this way annihilates the pictorial function at its root. It is this process of de-formation which will primarily preoccupy us from here on out. First we must demonstrate that the process of de-formation should in each and every case be viewed as a negative transubstantiation. To do this, nothing else is necessary than to apply the result from this single case to the other examples mentioned at the outset.

Again, we begin with the dramatic arts. Whether I view the man on the stage as the figure being portrayed or as a player in a role – the qualities of perception through the senses remain identical in either case. What is different are the emotions of the impression ('*Eindrucksgefühle*'). My feelings about Julius Caesar are naturally very different from those surrounding a Mr. X. Here again, Julius Caesar is in the first instance 'identical' to the figure I know from the history books. Now I combine the same emotions ('*Eindrucksgefühle*') which I have gained from studying history with the impressions ('*Eindrucksvorstellungen*') I receive from the person on the stage. Here too, the person is not quite identical with Julius Caesar 'himself': this is due to the fact that the make up, or at least the accompanying circumstances (his existence in the present, his movements on the stage etc.) do not conform to my image of Julius Caesar. The actor Mr. X who is playing Julius Caesar 'in person' is very different from that historical figure. In this case again the shift of emotions ('*Eindrucksgefühle*') occurs while the accompanying ideas ('*Eindrucksvorstellungen*') remain consistent. This is after all a process with which we have become familiar: it is called the 'destruction of the dramatic illusion.' It would be tedious to rehearse the remaining examples as elaborately. For this reason we only mention them in passing. The same intellectual impressions ('*Eindrucksvorstellungen*') are evoked by the photograph of an acquaintance or as a stained piece of paper, a painting as a landscape or as paint on a piece of canvas, the toy of a child as a horse or as a stick, a statesman being perceived as an ambassador or as a private citizen, whether the crown is seen as an investment of power or as a weight on the head, baptism as a deliverance from sin or water spread over the body, a medal as a sign of honor or as a piece of decoration, or whether black cloth is conceived as a colored fabric or as a sign of mourning. Only the emotions ('*Eindrucksgefühle*') vary in each case. Our external and internal response to the persons, objects and processes themselves might be quite different from that to those who are being deputized, depicted or symbolized. Initially, we see those who are 'the same' everywhere as we know and experience them, and yet they are not 'themselves'. Yet later we no longer see that which is being deputized, represented, depicted and symbolized, but instead only the agent performing the substitution, illustration, depiction or symbolization – we

recognize this as 'itself' but completely different and distinct from the other. This 'de-formation' presents itself everywhere in the same manner with nothing to inhibit or contradict our explanation.

I have just said that the conception of the image worshipper, the spectator of the dramatic illusion etc. initially appears natural to us, and that the opposite point of view only arises in us at a later time. This is the final point I would like to make in the first part of these reflections. Quite obviously, it is not the 'positive' but rather the 'negative transubstantiation' and thus the 'de-formation' which slowly develops in the life of the individual as well as in the species. As far as the individual objects are concerned, the non-symbolic conception frequently precedes the symbolic: most symbols only achieved this status at a certain point; as individuals, we also only learn their symbolic connotation at a certain time. In the subjects we are discussing here, there can be no doubt however that the opposite is true: the worship with images came earlier than iconoclasm – why else would the images have been made? The more naïve the spectator is, the more fully will he indulge in the dramatic illusion. The visual arts also existed before they could be 'properly recognized' (*'ehesie "durchschaut" wird'*). It is children and not grown-ups who play with sticks and spoons. Primitive peoples live with civil formalities and religious mysteries without being critical of the force of the customs. Doubts about the absolute significance of ceremonies, sacraments, symbols, insignia and social phrases only emerge from a very critical reflection. We might add that naïve people are the ones who believe themselves to be recognizing external objects and to be speaking the truth. We can see that de-formation occurred as a grand historical process which turned those things being represented, depicted and symbolized into nothing more than agents performing a representation, depiction or symbolization. We make no judgment of value in connection with this: this process might equally well be described as one of 'enlightenment' or of 'impoverishment' of human nature. We are here concerned only with the fact itself. The consequences of this, and particularly for the visual and performing arts, will provide the subject for the second part of our reflections.

II. Conclusion

We have seen that a grand historical process of 'de-formation' made it increasingly difficult for humanity to link the ideas and images arising from impressions of things (*'Eindrucksvorstellungen'*) together with the concomitantly arising emotions (*'Eindrucksgefühle'*) and caused the objects being depicted to become mere objects performing a representation. This de-formation not only caused the images to lose their value, but also thwarted the purposes which they served. It negates the cult function, undercuts the performing arts as well as the visual arts, it confounds the instinct for games, destroys the system of law, annihilates the use of the sacraments, as well as negating the forms of social life. For this reason, nothing could be more easily understood than the attempts made by the

opposite interests to paralyze the effects of this de-formation. These attempts fall into two very different groups.

The efforts of the one group are devoted to providing new content for the faltering relationship of the image to its subject, by installing a causal relationship between the two – they interpret that which is depicted as the effect of the agent of the image, and even assert a direct causal connection. This would mean that the right to the coronation carries certain legal consequences, granting the monarch an authority which he would not have had previously. If the coronation had originally been a 'symbol' of this acquisition of power, if it was conceived as actually contained within the ceremony, it would now become like the condition of a positive legal norm, and thus negate the effect of the de-formation. Things would be similar with the legal ramifications of those statements which an ambassador makes 'in the name of' the monarch, a judge 'in the name' of the head of state, a counselor 'in the name of' the party, or any mandatary or *negotiorum gestor* 'in the name of' their client or *dominus negotii*. Even when theology makes the relationship of Baptism and the forgiveness of sins the subject of a particular dogma, this works in essentially the same way. For now the forgiveness of sins is not seen as 'symbolized' in the action of Baptism, but rather as its dogmatically defined legal result. On the other hand, this sequence is only then possible where there is an action being symbolized, and this action is either in the present or the future. Only actions can have causal relationships, and only actions in the present or the future can be the result of current actions. If a symbolized action occurred in the past, such as the murder of Julius Ceasar for instance, it could never be conceived as the effect of current symbolizing actions, such as the production of the play by Shakespeare. Such an explanation is even more thoroughly out of the question when we are dealing not with depicted actions but instead with depicted objects, as in the examples of the children's toys or landscape painting. It would be absurd to consider the horse to be an effect of the stick or the painted landscape to be an effect of the painted spots contributing to its depiction. If the results of the de-formation are to be countered in spite of this in games and in art, then this cannot be due to a causal relationship inserted in place of the original representational relation, but this function must be assumed by another more apt relationship.

This relationship is that of similarity. The fact that similitude plays a secondary role in the relation of the representation to its subject ('*des Abbildenden zum Abgebildeten*') is undeniable from the fact that it is not present in any primitive society in any meaningful way, while it generally increases in tandem with the process of de-formation. To recognize that similitude between the representation and its subject does not present the origin but rather the goal of the process of de-formation, one has but to compare the stick to the rocking horse, the cooking spoon to the doll, fetishes and primitive idols to Greek images of gods and portraits, the dramas of Shakespeare to those of the contemporary stage, or the pathos or its dramatic diction to the dialectically colored cant of our contemporary ambient

drama.⁵ It is also not difficult to recognize the reason for this fact. As long as we continue to associate the image with the feelings impressing us from the representation (*'Eindruckgefühle'*) with our idea of the image (*'Eindrucksvorstellungen'*), and as long as the qualities of the image are inherent to the substance of the image, then the identity of both will be maintained. Only when the impressed feelings normally associated with the image (*'dem Abbildenden'*) assert themselves more strongly does the difference between the two become more conscious. This becomes all the more decisive with an increasing difference between the two clusters of emotions. The impressed emotions normally accompanying these qualities relate to these qualities themselves according to a regular correlation. This occurs in such a way that the feelings surrounding both the subject and object of the image become more alike (*'die Eindruckgefühle von Abbildendem und Abgebildeten'*), while these qualities are themselves more similar to one another. If we bear in mind that the process of de-formation developed with jumps and starts, then the situation is as follows: the more similar the subject and object of the image become, the more easily can the former be seen as the image of the latter, even when our receptivity for such imagery has been reduced. A child who can no longer accept the substitution of a stick for a horse might for example still enjoy playing on a rocking horse. Let us use the term 'naturalization' (*'Naturalisierung'*) of game and art for the process of increasing similitude between the subject and the object of the image, between that being represented and that performing the depiction, and we can recognize this as the correlating corrective to the de-formation of toys and art works being discussed above.

Before continuing, it is worth recalling a significant special case in the process of similitude. If the qualities of the agent performing the representation approach those of the object being depicted, then those of the latter must be completely known – in other words it is necessary to be familiar not merely with the image as it impresses us intellectually (*'Eindrucksvorstellungen'*) in 'normal' circumstances, but also as this would appear to us in all imaginable conditions. Yet such a knowledge is not always present to the extent that one would imagine. Our conception of the objects is also derived from a vision (*'Vorstellungen'*), that is to say from images. This means that in shifting phases of the process of de-formation, the feelings and the ideas arising from our impression of the image (*'Eindruckgefühle und Eindrucksvorstellungen'*) will relate to one another in varying ways. For instance, the impression we have of an object at a distance is composed of a spot of color on the one hand, and feelings about distance and size on the other – while 'feelings of size' includes our intuitions about stretching and crouching etc. If the object is

⁵ This is the significance of the more cerebral qualities of art (*'Programmaturik'*). Before the process of de-formation, a piece of music had 'meaning' for all levels of society where the emotions it evokes were experienced: there was a reason for Schopenhauer to declare that nature and music represented two manifestations of one single substance. After de-formation, a piece of music would have appeared as nothing more than a sequence of sounds without meaning if its acoustic impressions were not made to mimic certain of those from our daily experience.

sensed as being distant, the spot of color will relate to it like a picture lacking in similitude. For this reason, the spot of color is linked to the emotions arising from our impression of the object ('*Eindruckgefühle*') in the early stages of the process of de-formation, such as the feeling of stretching oneself; the distant object is perceived as if it were large, although the spot of color in itself, i.e. at a 'normal' distance would be associated with the feeling of crouching, and seen in the small size. If the spot of color loses its pictorial function in the course of the de-formation process, that is to say it is associated with the normal emotions ('*Eindruckgefühle*') and no longer with those arising from the object, then in this case we again become conscious of the agent of the representation rather than its subject, and of the small spot of color rather than the large object. We describe this shift in conception as 'learning to view in perspective.' The same by the way, is also true of the colors: for anybody who has not yet 'learned to view things impressionistically' will feel a shadow on snow to be white in spite of the fact that the intellectual impression he receives in 'normal' circumstances would appear grey. What are the consequences of this distinction in the vision of objects for artistic representation? Obviously, even if they might be geared to objective similarity, a person in relatively primitive conditions would lend the image such qualities which are normally associated with the emotions arising from the object as he sees it. Such a person would render a distant church tower by a simple line, and a shadow on snow with the purest possible shade of white. This manner of representation will only seem extremely dissimilar to a person who has not learned to see things perspectively and impressionistically. This is because unlike them, he is no longer comparing these with the objects as they appear in 'normal' circumstances, but instead compares them with the visionary image deriving from concrete circumstances. For this reason, he will render the small church steeple as a simple line and the shadow in the snow as a grey blotch. These are cases in which there is no approximation between the image and the object being depicted; although there most certainly is such a process between the image and the adjusted impression arising from that object. Nevertheless, this adjustment of the impression is definitely aligned with de-formation. De-formation is after all also based on the fact that the agent of the representation (that cluster of sense impressions actually present in given circumstances) is linked with the associated feelings ('*Eindruckgefühle*') rather than with those feelings arising from the subject of the image i.e. the object itself. From this it follows that the inner image of the object, that complex of sensual impressions, replaces the perception of the object. Here again, the forces of de-formation and assimilation work in tandem, and this is the context in which perspective drawing and impressionist painting must be seen as a manifestation of the process of naturalization of art ('*die Naturalisierung der Kunst*'). We must return to this general phenomenon.

It is necessary to stress that the processes of de-formation and naturalization developed in steps. As the de-formation progresses, one can definitely ascertain that

an increasing similarity between the subject and object of the representation calls for the latter to be seen as the image of the former. This formulation leads us to another observation. It appears that each stage in the process of de-formation corresponds to a modicum of dissimilarity still admissible at this particular stage without threatening the pictorial function of the agent of the image (*'des Abbildenden'*). We might call this measure of dissimilarity the 'conventional moment' of an artistic style. On the stage during antiquity, cothurnus and masks were accepted by convention, that is to say that the dissimilarity between the actor and the dramatic personage did not prevent the former from being seen as a representation of the latter, while such articles would completely destroy the 'dramatic illusion' on our contemporary stage. The conventional element in art therefore diminishes to the same extent that de-formation and naturalization make their progress.

Nonetheless, one should not believe that this development could ever reach a final resolution. An art without any trace of convention, i.e. with an absolute similarity between the subject and object of the representation, is as inconceivable as an art consisting exclusively in conventions, i.e. one with an absolute dissimilarity between those two. This would be inconceivable not merely due to the fact that absolute dissimilarity would be impossible, but also since the apprehension of an image requires at least some sort of point of contact. As a matter of fact, the stick does resemble the horse, and the cooking spoon resembles the swaddled child at least to the extent that it can be held between the legs or in our arms respectively. Even that is no more improbable. For aside from the fact that an absolute similitude does not exist, and that no single object in the world can be completely reproduced by another, we would no longer describe even something close to such a borderline case as art. Our sculpture includes the conventional element for instance of a lack of coloration. An end should be put to this, and polychromy could be reintroduced! In any case, this would then still involve the depiction of something capable of motion by another lacking that property. Polychrome statuary could be made into an automaton! Even in such a case the mechanical medium would bear differences to the organism it represented. If this convention were to be removed, then the result would no longer be considered sculpture; we would have moved into the sphere of dramatic art. Yet even drama would no longer be drama if one tragic situation were simply being represented by another equally tragic situation!

The naturalization of art presents itself as an endless development with no beginning or possible conclusion. Once we have recognized this, it becomes possible for us to examine its nature from another point of view. We recognize that all representations in games or in art share the goal of a subjective truth, to make the image convey the meaning of its content to the spectator. In attaining this goal, the 'creator' and the 'audience' participate in different ways. The creator lends the vehicle an objective likeness in relation to the subject; yet the spectator must contribute his own subjective understanding in order to recognize the content of the representation. The process of de-formation and naturalization alters the relation of

these two factors as well as the role of the creator to the spectator in the relative success of the artistic effect. At the beginning of this process, the element of the conception ('*Auffassung*') had the more prominent role, and the spectator also did along with it. The creator is responsible for nothing more than the stick; and the child turns this into the horse on his own account. At the end of this process, the element of likeness is as dominant, and with it the role of the creator: one need not belabor that the bronze horse at this end of the process stands for a living example; and the bronze horse is made by the artist.

As for the rest, one must see these two aspects of the development of art as both dependent on one another. It is obvious that the initial impulse, and with it the trend to naturalization, commonly comes from the creator. Frequently enough, it is the artist who overcomes a convention, and is forced to do battle against the conventional conceptions of the public. On the other hand, the independence of the process of de-formation is sufficiently demonstrated by those cases in which there can be no question of naturalization. We have seen examples with iconoclasm, the reduction of judicial, religious and social symbols, the emergence of epistemological idealism and so forth. Neither the increase in the element of likeness nor the reduction in the conceptual element can be seen as the plain and primary factor - this must instead be found in the shift in the relation of these two elements to one another, and the correlative progress of de-formation and naturalization.

What remains steady in the course of this entire process is the sum of the two factors: subjective truth. Boccaccio once made the comment that the paintings of Giotto were so true to nature that they could be confused with their models. Today, this painter might be the last about whom we would say such a thing. This is due to the fact that we are no longer able to amend its relatively limited measure of similitude with the strong pictorial conception ('*stark ausgebildete Bildauffassung*') current in the public at that time. In any work of art that is up to date, similarity and the conceptual element together comprise a constant quantity. Even before the Colleoni monument by Verrocchio, it is not possible to experience a greater subjective truth than any of the boys playing in the street with their toy horses. This for the simple reason that these boys are experiencing the greatest conceivable, namely the absolute subjective truth: for them their stick is in fact a horse!

The question which has been restrained now arises with a renewed force. How are we to evaluate this entire process of de-formation and naturalization. At the same time it is clear that there can be no simple or unequivocal answer. This process reveals its double aspect at every turn. It empowers the gifts of observation, enriches the powers of design, and intensifies the life of the creator, while at the same time it decreases the imaginative force ('*Auffassungskraft*') of the spectator, impoverishes their fantasy, and reduces their lives without ever in the least affecting the ultimate result of the art work, its subjective truth. It represents neither progress nor regression. This is ultimately simple to understand. By its innermost nature, this entire process presents itself as a development. Such developments only appear as

progress from a one-sided point of view – and I believe that this insight will prevail in spite of all popular slogans. In and of themselves they function as independently of all values as do all developments in natural science. It is no 'better' for a stone to fall to the ground rather than hovering in the air than an old man is 'better' than a child. Only a child can be more intelligent than another child, and only an old man more so than another old man. In the same manner, a primitive artist might be a better painter, poet etc. than another, and a naturalistic artist might be superior to another. Naturalistic art in itself cannot be better than primitive art. The observations we have made also lead to no judgment about naturalism in art. We must be satisfied if they can contribute to an understanding of it.