

The place of the Vienna school of art history in Polish art historiography of the interwar period

Wojciech Bałus

I

Before Poland regained independence, art history had been taught at two universities in Austrian part of the land called Galicia: in Cracow, since 1882, and in Lviv [Lemberg], since 1893. After 1918 chairs of art history were established at the universities in Warsaw, Poznań and Vilnius (the last in the Faculty of Fine Arts). An important position was held by the Department of Polish Architecture at Warsaw Polytechnic. The scholars discussed in the present paper had the following affiliations: Tadeusz Szydlowski was associated with art history at the Jagiellonian University in Cracow, the Slovene Wojślaw (Vojeslav) Molè with the Slavonic Centre of the same university (he was specially brought in from abroad to work in this institution in 1925), Fr. Szczęsny (Felix) Dettloff with the University of Poznań, and Władysław Podlacha and Karolina Lanckorońska with the University of Lviv, whereas the youngest ones, Juliusz Starzyński and Michał Walicki, were associated with Warsaw Polytechnic (Starzyński was also employed in other institutions in Warsaw).¹

II

In 1929 Szydlowski published *Spór o Giotto* [*The Giotto Controversy*]. As implied in its subtitle, *The Problem of the Authorship of the Frescoes at Assisi in Light of the Development of the Method of Art History*, the essay was not meant to resolve the problem of Giotto's role in the decoration of the church of St Francis. The frescoes of this building served rather as a convenient pretext for presenting transformations that had taken place within art history from the end of the nineteenth century to the 1920s.² According to Szydlowski, there were two main research attitudes in the contemporary practice of art-historical research. He named the first, and older, one by the German term *Kunstgeschichte als Formgeschichte* [art history as the history of forms].³ This method, in his opinion, had taken shape at the end of the nineteenth and the beginning of the twentieth century, and its objective was a stylistic and comparative analysis based on precise scientific foundations, that is, above all, on clearly defined terms and methodological principles. These principles and terminology had been developed, according to Szydlowski, by scholars of the German-language area. He wrote:

While French art historians are usually still guided by their personal taste – which, indeed, is often quite subtle and derives from a quite profound artistic culture – and

¹ Wojciech Bałus, 'A Marginalized Tradition? Polish Art History', in Matthew Rampley et al., eds., *Art History and Visual Studies in Europe. Transnational Discourses and National Frameworks*, Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2012, 439–441.

² Tadeusz Szydlowski, *Spór o Giotto. Problem autorstwa fresków w Asyżu na tle rozwoju metody historii sztuki*, Cracow, 1929 (an offprint from *Przegląd Współczesny* 8 : 81, 1929, 15-46).

³ Szydlowski, *Spór o Giotto*, 22.

do not attempt to find any thorough, rational justifications for their opinions, the Germans, although perhaps from nature not as sensitive and sophisticated [as the French], tower over them intellectually, having built a system of clear and consistent art-historical definitions, and having set down [theoretical] frameworks which are indispensable for an objective and systematic analysis of artistic phenomena.⁴

Then Szydlowski went on to list those scholars whom he considered to have contributed the most to the shaping and perfecting of the 'artistic scientific method'. These, in his view, could be named straight off: Franz Wickhoff, Alois Riegl, Heinrich Wölfflin, August Schmarsow and Max Dvořák.⁵

The other, slightly younger scholarly attitude noted by Szydlowski, was the *Kunstgeschichte als Geistesgeschichte* [art history as the history of the spirit].⁶ He associated its emergence with a return to idealism in the art of the twentieth century, and explained its objective as follows:

Art history should be concerned with getting to know not only the external shapes, but also the inner content of artistic phenomena; not only with their, so to speak, corporeal beauty, but also with their internal psychical content, discernible through the external form. In order to guess this content, one has to penetrate into the man behind the artwork, into his epoch and social environment, and combine the analysis of forms with an understanding of the underlying system of ideas; to juxtapose artistic facts with an historical understanding of the realm of the spiritual culture.⁷

Szydlowski considered Max Dvořák (who had recognised a turn towards idealism in European culture after the 1914-1918 war⁸) as the founder and main exponent of this orientation, adding that also the proposals of Fritz Burger, Ernst Heidrich and Wilhelm Pinder went in a similar direction.⁹

The phrase 'Vienna school' had not appeared in Szydlowski's discussion at all, even though the term had been employed by Otto Benesch already in 1920, and Władysław Podlacha had used it still earlier, in 1916.¹⁰ Apparently, it was more important for Szydlowski to identify the two main currents in art history than to assign any particular methodological attitudes to individual scholarly milieux. A similar course of reasoning can be found in Hans Tietze's papers from the mid-1920s, in which he in various ways argued the superiority of the *Kunstgeschichte als Geistesgeschichte* over purely formal investigation,

⁴ Szydlowski, *Spór o Giotta*, 21.

⁵ Szydlowski, *Spór o Giotta*, 21.

⁶ Szydlowski, *Spór o Giotta*, 22.

⁷ Szydlowski, *Spór o Giotta*, 22.

⁸ Max Dvořák, 'Über Greco und den Mannerismus', in *Kunstgeschichte als Geistesgeschichte. Studien zur abendländischen Kunstentwicklung*, München: R. Piper & Co., 1924, 275-276; Norbert Schmitz, *Kunst und Wissenschaft im Zeichen der Moderne. Exemplarische Studien zum Verhältnis von klassischer Avantgarde und zeitgenössischer Kunstgeschichte in Deutschland*, Bonn: VDG Verlag, 1993, 404-407.

⁹ Szydlowski, *Spór o Giotta*, 23-24.

¹⁰ Otto Benesch, 'Die Wiener kunsthistorische Schule', *Österreichische Rundschau* 62, 1920, 174-178; Władysław Podlacha, *Niektóre zagadnienia nowoczesnej historii sztuki*, Lviv, 1916 (an offprint from *Kwartalnik Historyczny* 29, 1916), 8.

which he had discussed in his *Die Methode der Kunstgeschichte* from 1913.¹¹ In a paper on the social function of art he also enumerated the contributions of various researchers to the field, but without dividing them according to the scholarly milieu in which they worked. He mentioned in this work Riegl, Wölfflin, Dvořák and Josef Strzygowski.¹²

The absence of the term 'Vienna school' in Szydlowski's writing may be explained in part by the poor dissemination of the phrase at the end of the 1920s, because, undoubtedly, it was only the well-known study by Julius von Schlosser from 1934¹³ that significantly contributed to the term's gaining a broader currency. But what seems to be of far more importance is that both the author of *The Giotto Controversy* and other scholars had been reading papers written in various milieux, which led them to combine the ideas developed in Vienna with concepts coming from elsewhere. Many years ago Joan Hart pointed out the relationship between the representatives of the older Vienna school and Wölfflin, and used the term 'invisible college' – understood as 'a sociological concept of closely linked intellectuals who read each other's work, cite each other, correspond and meet fairly often' – to describe the nature of this relationship.¹⁴ Although Szydlowski was not in as close a relation with the scholars mentioned in his paper (some of whom were no longer alive when he wrote it) as to be considered a member of a comparable *collegium invisible*, he had also acquired his knowledge and shaped his methodological position through the reading of works by various authors from various countries and universities.

The example of Szydlowski shows that it is not easy to identify the influences of a given 'school' on a group of scholars working, indeed, in one country but at various universities, and responding to the changing state of research. All one can do under such circumstances is to indicate the extent, or register, within which the inspirations and achievements of a given milieu had made their mark. And this is precisely the procedure I am going to employ in the present study. In some cases all that could be found was the awareness that a particular method of scholarly investigation had been developed in Vienna, while in other cases it was possible to determine the extent of direct inspiration by the theories of particular representatives of the Vienna school. Finally, no less instructive may be omissions, that is, the lack of references to the ideas of particular Viennese scholars or groups of scholars. It must be added for clarification that within the 'Vienna school' I count both the professors of the 'II Art History Institute of the University of Vienna', as Schlosser put it¹⁵ (Wickhoff, Riegl, Dvořák, Tietze, and Schlosser himself), and the representatives of the so-

¹¹ Hans Tietze, 'Geisteswissenschaftliche Kunstgeschichte', in Johannes Jahn, ed., *Die Kunstwissenschaft der Gegenwart in Selbstdarstellungen*, Leipzig: Felix Meiner, 1924, 183–198; Hans Tietze, 'Verlebendigung der Kunstgeschichte', in *Lebendige Kunstwissenschaft. Zur Krise der Kunst und der Kunstgeschichte*, Vienna: Krystall-Verlag, 1925, 47–54; Hans Tietze, *Die Methode der Kunstgeschichte*, Leipzig: Seemann Verlag, 1913.

¹² Hans Tietze, 'Die soziale Funktion der Kunst', *Jahrbuch für Soziologie* 1925, 284.

¹³ Julius von Schlosser, *Die Wiener Schule der Kunstgeschichte. Rückblick auf ein Säkulum deutscher Gelehrtenarbeit in Österreich (Mitteilungen des Österreichischen Instituts für Geschichtsforschung, Ergänzungsband 13 : 2)*, Innsbruck: Wagner, 1934.

¹⁴ Joan Hart, 'Some Reflections on Wölfflin and the Vienna School', in Stefan Krenn and Martina Pippal, eds., *Wien und die Entwicklung der kunsthistorischen Methode* (Hermann Fillitz and Martina Pippal, eds., *Akten des XXV. Internationalen Kongresses für Kunstgeschichte, Wien, 4.–10. September 1983*, vol. 1), Vienna, Cologne and Graz: Böhlau Verlag, 1984, 53.

¹⁵ Schlosser, *Die Wiener Schule der Kunstgeschichte*, 145.

called 'younger Vienna school' (in particular Hans Sedlmayr and Otto Pächt), and also – following the most recent research – Strzygowski.¹⁶

III

Except for Schmarsow and Dvořák, none of the scholars mentioned by Szydlowski wrote about Giotto. Their names appeared in the article only because of the contributions they had made to the development of research methods. So the Vienna scholars, like Wölfflin,¹⁷ were understood in interwar Poland mainly as the founders of modern art history, to whom the discipline owed its autonomy and who had put it on a new track. Michał Walicki wrote,

the last thirty years in art history, a period so significant for the development of this young scholarly discipline, was marked by the increasing role of Vienna, which had come to the fore in research and teaching in the area under discussion. During that time a number of eminent scholars occupy the chairs of art history, starting from the 'Vienna objectivists' – Wickhoff and Riegl – to Schlosser [...], and to the late and much lamented M. Dvorzak [sic].¹⁸

Nor did Władysław Podlacha have any doubt about the contribution (but only contribution!) of the Vienna milieu to affirming the autonomy of art history. In a summing-up to his analysis of the methods of Riegl, Wölfflin and Schmarsow, he stated, 'These methods [...] recur against a background of historical facts, which have been identified and adopted for our field using procedures practised in the humanities, and these methods have tinged art history with a specific quality that makes it impossible to identify it [our discipline – W. B.] with any other historical science'.¹⁹

A more precise definition of what the methodological autonomy of art history actually consisted in could be found in the writing of both Podlacha and Molè. The latter wrote in an introduction to his *History of Early Christian and Early Byzantine Art*, two years after *The Giotto Controversy*, that this autonomy arose as a result of the emergence of 'extrahistorical' methods. These methods had introduced, in his opinion,

a number of objective criteria for assessing works of art, which, when combined with historical investigation, have become a basis for explaining the manifestations of artistic creation in their causative relationship. After all, only history can explain a

¹⁶ Edwin Lachnit, *Die Wiener Schule der Kunstgeschichte und die Kunst ihrer Zeit. Zum Verhältnis von Methode und Forschungsgegenstand am Beginn der Moderne*, Vienna, Cologne and Weimar: Böhlau Verlag, 2005, 8 and 123; Ján Bakoš, "'Humanists" versus "Relativists". Methodological Visions and Revisions within the Vienna School', in *Discourses and Strategies: The Role of the Vienna School in Shaping Central European Approaches to Art History & Related Discourses*, Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang Edition, 2013, 18.

¹⁷ Wojciech Bałus, 'In the Glow of a Classic: Remarks on the Reception of Heinrich Wölfflin in Polish Art History', in Evonne Levy and Tristan Weddigen, eds., *The Global Reception of Heinrich Wölfflin's 'Principles of Art History' (1915-2015)* (forthcoming).

¹⁸ Michał Walicki, 'Józef Strzygowski', *Pamiętnik Warszawski* 1 : 2, 1929, 105.

¹⁹ Władysław Podlacha, 'Historja sztuki a historja kultury', in *Pamiętnik IV Powszechnego Zjazdu Historyków Polskich w Poznaniu*, Lvov, 1925, vol. 1, Section 5, 12.

work of art as an historical fact, but this history should not stop at the surface, but has to reach deep down, to the very roots of artistic creation, and search for an explanation why this creation realised its intentions in these particular expressive artistic forms. These forms are autonomous and do not compare with anything else, and their roots form the basis for every form of artistic creation in relationship to man himself – be it as an artist, a milieu, a generation, or an epoch. Therefore style is a reflection of man, and the history of style is a history of the human spirit.²⁰

The essence of these 'extrahistorical methods' was explained in more depth by Podlacha. Historical investigation, he repeated after Tietze's textbook, encompassed an evaluation of the authenticity of a given artwork, its dating and attribution, that is, a 'critical' procedure (in the sense of 'source criticism').²¹ Of 'extrahistorical' character, in turn, was the formal interpretation, which was aimed at 'specifying the artistic problem in a work of art under scrutiny and determining a general artistic tendency characteristic of a given historical period'.²² Although on the 'historical' level an analysis of the written sources combined with modern methods of technical investigation and a connoisseurship of the Giovanni Morelli kind were sufficient, on the second level there functioned 'systematic' methods, originating from an awareness of the general laws that governed art and its development, the principles of the construction of form and the human modes of seeing. The 'systematic', or 'extrahistorical', methods were based on the achievements of all of the above-mentioned founders of modern art history and they were the result of the idea of creating an objective, fully scientific theory of art – *Kunstwissenschaft*.²³ The general categories, formulated by Wickhoff, Riegl, Wölfflin, Schmarsow and Dvořák by means of isolating universal features from the art of various epochs, which subsequently could be applied to defining particular historical styles, allowed critics to capture the idiosyncrasies of the formal construction of sculptures, paintings and buildings, that is, to decide whether they were more optic than haptic, idealistic or naturalistic, crystalline or organic, or whether some kind of the *Kunstwollen* was responsible for the transformation of forms, and so on. Eventually, all this was supposed to lead, according to Podlacha, to a psychological analysis of the artwork, and to deciphering of its spiritual content, in keeping with the tenets of the *Kunstgeschichte als Geistesgeschichte*.²⁴

Consequently, the Viennese scholars were considered co-founders of the methods of formal analysis that enabled critics both to capture the peculiarities of a style of a given epoch or milieu and to get an insight into the 'spiritual' content of a given style. Their concepts were treated as an obvious basis for detailed investigation into particular artistic

²⁰ Wojśław Molè, *Historia sztuki starożytności i wczesnobizantyjskiej. Wstęp do historii sztuki bizantyjskiej u Słowian*, Lviv: K.S. Jakubowskiego Spółki, 1931, 22.

²¹ Władysław Podlacha, 'Historia sztuki, jej założenia i metody badawcze', *Sprawozdania z Posiedzeń Wydziału II Nauk Historycznych, Społecznych i Filozoficznych Towarzystwa Naukowego Warszawskiego* 42, 1949 [1950], 75–76; Tietze, *Die Methode der Kunstgeschichte*, chapter IV: *Kritik*; Hubert Locher, *Kunstgeschichte als historische Theorie der Kunst 1750–1950*, Munich: Wilhelm Fink Verlag, 2001, 56.

²² Podlacha, 'Historia sztuki, jej założenia i metody badawcze', 77.

²³ Rolf M. Hauck, 'Kunstgeschichte oder Kunstwissenschaft? Fritz Burgers Konzept einer "Systematik der Kunstwissenschaft"', in Ulrich Pfisterer, ed., *Fritz Burger (1877–1916) 'eine neue Kunstgeschichte'*, Passau: Dietmar Klinger Verlag, 2016, 127–128.

²⁴ Hauck, 'Kunstgeschichte oder Kunstwissenschaft?', 78.

phenomena, a basis which, however, was so general that it usually did not register in the footnotes, as may be testified by a remark of Juliusz Starzyński that Dvořák's views 'are nowadays fairly well known, even among Polish art historians'.²⁵

IV

According to Adam Małkiewicz, in the interwar period 'the methodological influence of Vienna on Polish, and in particular on Cracow, art history manifested itself [...] mainly in emphasising the importance of research into style and genetic relations of forms, combined with philological source criticism', and this was supposed to have resulted from the influence of the concepts of Wickhoff and Riegl.²⁶ Apart from the fact that a combination of historical investigation and analysis of style had been initiated in Berlin, back in the nineteenth century, so this could not be considered an unconditional criterion for the distinctiveness of the Vienna school influence (although an emphasis on written sources in this milieu was significant)²⁷, mention should be made of frequent occurrences of chapters dealing with iconography in published works, especially of medievalists from all around Poland. This kind of scholarly procedure directs one's attention, on the one hand, to the teaching activity of Wickhoff and Tietze's already mentioned textbook, which was widely used in university teaching in the interwar period, and on the other hand, to Podlacha's lectures held in Lviv, and intended to be published as an outline of the methodology of art history (which, however, never appeared in print).²⁸ Both Tietze and Podlacha recommended that, after a 'criticism' of the artwork and of the written sources related to it had been carried out, one should conduct an 'interpretation' (called *Auffassung* by Tietze), divided into the iconographic and formal interpretations, in Podlacha's model supplemented additionally with psychological interpretation.²⁹ A procedure which combined research on style and the genetic relations of forms with philological source criticism and iconographic examination should thus be considered a fairly standard approach, which is indirectly confirmed by the fact that Hans Sedlmayr included all the above stages of analysis in the scope of the *erste Kunstwissenschaft* [first science of art history].³⁰ Needless to say, Tietze's textbook had played an important role in the dissemination of this model, but in the interwar period it was also propagated by Polish scholars.

²⁵ Juliusz Starzyński, 'Z powodu artykułu K. Lanckorońskiej "Przyczynki do badań nad religijną sztuką baroku" (Uwagi dyskusyjne)', *Biuletyn Historii Sztuki i Kultury* 2, 1933/1934, 162, note 1.

²⁶ Adam Małkiewicz, 'Polska historia sztuki wobec "szkoły wiedeńskiej"', in *Z dziejów polskiej historii sztuki. Studia i szkice*, Cracow: Universitas, 2005, 70-71.

²⁷ Matthew Rampley, *The Vienna School of Art History. Empire and the Politics of Scholarship, 1847-1918*, University Park: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 2013, 18-21 and 26-27; Schlosser, *Die Wiener Schule der Kunstgeschichte*, passim.

²⁸ The role of iconography in Wickhoff's teaching activity was discussed by Schlosser, *Die Wiener Schule der Kunstgeschichte*, 177. For Podlacha's textbook, kept in the collection of the Ossolineum in Wrocław (call no. Akc. 64/75), see Mieczysław Zlat, 'Władysław Podlacha (1875-1951)', *Rocznik Historii Sztuki* 37, 2012, 25 and 28.

²⁹ Tietze, *Die Methode der Kunstgeschichte*, 350-406; Podlacha, 'Historia sztuki, jej założenia i metody badawcze', 73-78.

³⁰ Hans Sedlmayr, 'Kunstgeschichte als Kunstgeschichte', in *Kunst und Wahrheit. Zur Theorie und Methode der Kunstgeschichte*, Hamburg: Rowohlt, 1958, 36-38.

Thus, when searching for traces of particular influences of the Vienna school, one has to delve more deeply into the research objectives. One should concentrate on the terminology used in the texts and on the way in which historical processes were explained, as well as on the scope of the problems discussed.

The term *Kunstwollen* had appeared in various papers. It was usually mentioned as an important element of Riegl's theory but it is impossible to determine unequivocally whether it was an element of the authors' own views. Only in a few cases can one be quite sure that certain Polish art historians indeed accepted the existence of the *Kunstwollen*. This category was used by Dettloff³¹, Józef Dutkiewicz (to be discussed below) and Starzyński. The last of them maintained, referring not only to Riegl but also to Panofsky, that one can 'objectively determine the existence of a collective creative will in every period, which is the common property of a leading group of men, and which finds its expression in the style of a given epoch'.³²

Dettloff, who considered himself a pupil of Dvořák and a supporter of the method of Wickhoff and Riegl³³, also clearly followed the procedures of the analysis of style developed in Vienna. In his study *U źródeł sztuki Wita Stosza* [*At the Roots of the Art of Veit Stoss*], in which he investigated the origins of the master's style, he outlined long genealogies of Late Gothic sculpture in Western Europe from which Stoss's stylistic idiom supposedly derived. He then inscribed these genealogies into the overriding current of the development of fifteenth-century art, which proceeded, broadly speaking, from idealism and spiritualism to naturalism. In this emphasis on formal and stylistic evolution and in recognising transformations leading in the direction of naturalism, Dettloff followed the ideas of Dvořák, but not from his later years, when he was devising the concept of the *Kunstgeschichte als Geistesgeschichte*, but from his early period, when – in the spirit of Wickhoff and Riegl – he was developing the *Kunstgeschichte als Formgeschichte*.³⁴ In the background of Dettloff's discussion about the origins of the art of Veit Stoss there recurred a vision of the processes that had led to the emergence of the revolutionary naturalism of Jan van Eyck, which had been described in Dvořák's earlier works. It resonated, in fact, not only in the background, because Dettloff several times referred directly to *Das Rätsel der Kunst der Brüder van Eyck*, stating, for example, that

no one will [...] contrast the naturalism of the Burgundian-Netherlandish art from the end of the fourteenth and the beginning of the fifteenth century with the allegedly 'inherently idealistic' French art from the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries [any more]. It is to be owed [...] above all to Dvořák that these erroneous beliefs have finally been disposed of, since they originated from insufficient familiarity with and a lack of understanding of the basic pre-Sluterian and pre-Eyckian creative tendencies

³¹ Fr. Szczęsny Dettloff, *U źródeł sztuki Wita Stosza*, Warsaw: Politechnika Warszawska, 1935, 7 and 14.

³² Juliusz Starzyński, 'O zadaniach nowoczesnej historii sztuki', *Życie Sztuki* 3, 1938, 160.

³³ Ks. Szczęsny Dettloff, 'Ćwierć wieku historii sztuki w Polsce', *Kurier Poznański* 1925, no. 341, 10; Tadeusz J. Żuchowski, 'Ks. prof. Szczęsny Dettloff (1878–1961)', *Artium Quaestiones* 22, 2011, 8–9.

³⁴ Lech Kalinowski, *Max Dvořák i jego metoda badań nad sztuką*, Warsaw: PWN, 1974, 17–21; Artur Rosenauer, 'Das Rätsel der Kunst der Brüder van Eyck – Max Dvořák und seine Stellung zu Wickhoff und Riegl', in Stefan Krenn and Martina Pippal, eds., *Wien und die Entwicklung der kunsthistorischen Methode*, 45–52; Ján Bakoš, 'Max Dvořák – A Neglected Re-Visionist', in *Wiener Schule: Erinnerung und Perspektiven* (*Wiener Jahrbuch für Kunstgeschichte* 53, 2004), 55–71.

in which, in spite of their – in my opinion – spiritualistic tenor, there was still plenty of room for the strong naturalistic currents of Gothic art in general.³⁵

Yet Dettloff went beyond the Viennese horizon in his research. In stylistic analyses of sculptures he emphasised the ways of handling drapery folds and their relation to the body. He wrote, for example,

There is an ingeniously devised rhythmical movement of the folded masses in this arrangement, [...] as the hands, clasped on the chest, have created there a deep folding movement of the voluminous chasuble. This movement, however, has been muffled by the slightly agitated *pallium*, at the end of which the turbulent waves of drapery become almost entirely dead, emitting just one fold, entirely not bent, which is then taken up by the alb, making the masses agitated again by means of the gather of garment that covers the feet of the figure.³⁶

This kind of research procedure, endowed with the slightly ironical name of the *Faltenphilologie* [philology of the folds], had been initiated by Wilhelm Vöge at Freiburg im Breisgau and was subsequently developed by Wilhelm Pinder, especially in his study, *Die deutsche Plastik, vom ausgehenden Mittelalter zum Ende der Renaissance*, which initially appeared in separate booklets in 1914–1928 and was eventually published as a two-volume book.³⁷ Thus, also in the case of Dettloff, it is plain to see that – although he continued the line of reasoning of Riegl and the early Dvořák – his constant involvement in the scholarly debate had led him to employing also patterns and research procedures that derived from outside the Vienna school, as long as they suited the research problems he dealt with. Certainly no scholar of Gothic sculpture in the interwar period could have remained indifferent to the works of Vöge, Pinder and other German medievalists. In a similar way, scholars who wrote about Baroque architecture referred as much to the ideas of Wölfflin as to those of Riegl.³⁸

A singular approach to the achievements of the school of Vienna was demonstrated by the already mentioned Dutkiewicz. He had come up with the suggestion that an individual methodological standard be devised for research in Polish art, which, in his

³⁵ Dettloff, *U źródeł sztuki Wita Stosza*, 18; Max Dvořák, *Das Rätsel der Kunst der Brüder van Eyck*, Munich: R. Piper & Co., 1925 (first published in 1903). So the opinion of Adam Małkiewicz, that 'Dettloff, in his focus on the style of the examined artworks and through his use of the genetic relations of forms and comparative methods, was influenced by Riegl', has to be rectified (Małkiewicz, 'Polska historia sztuki wobec "szkoły wiedeńskiej"', 72–73).

³⁶ Dettloff, *U źródeł sztuki Wita Stosza*, 10.

³⁷ Wilhelm Pinder, *Die deutsche Plastik, vom ausgehenden Mittelalter zum Ende der Renaissance*, vol. 1–2, Wildpark–Potsdam: Akademische Verlags-Gesellschaft, 1924–1929; Willibald Sauerländer, 'Kleider machen Leute. Vergessenes aus Viollet-le-Ducs "Dictionnaire du Mobilier français"', in *Geschichte der Kunst – Gegenwart der Kritik*, Cologne: Du Mont, 1999, 145–146; Gábor Endrődi, 'Die Geburt des mittelalterlichen Stils aus dem Geiste Michelangelos – Michelangelo und die Pisani im Kontext des kunsthistorischen Werks von Wilhelm Vöge', in Wilhelm Vöge, *Michelangelo und die Pisani*, Gábor Endrődi, ed., Munich: Zentralinstitut für Kunstgeschichte, 2016, 97; Marlite Halbertsma, *Wilhelm Pinder und die deutsche Kunstgeschichte*, Worms: Wernersche Verlagsgesellschaft, 1992, 21–24.

³⁸ See, for example, Juliusz Starzyński, *Wilanów. Dzieje budowy pałacu za Jana III*, Warsaw: Politechnika Warszawska, 1933, 45; Tadeusz Mańkowski, 'Lwowskie kościoły barokowe', *Prace Sekcji Historii Sztuki i Kultury Towarzystwa Naukowego we Lwowie* 2, 1935, 128.

opinion, was absolutely necessary because of the peripheral character of the majority of the artworks, and he justified the 'vernacular' features of Polish artistic production by reference to the local *Kunstwollen*, stating, 'The west and the south, the east and some anthropological and geological predispositions are the main elements that shaped, in the process of historical development, the collective artistic volition in Poland'.³⁹ Thus he combined Riegl's concept of the 'national *Kunstwollen*', introduced in *Das holländische Gruppenporträt* and further developed also in the interwar period,⁴⁰ with the theory of the influence of the environment, explicitly referring to Hippolyte Taine.⁴¹

V

The *Kunstgeschichte als Geistesgeschichte* did not evoke any strong response in Poland in the interwar period. As in other East-Central European countries, research methods were dominated by the traditional and better established stylistic approach, conducted at the level of the *erste Kunstwissenschaft* [first science of art history].⁴² Szydłowski complained that 'the aims and methods of investigation that have become routinely employed in European research are finding a poor reception in Poland'.⁴³ Also, the above-mentioned psychological interpretation of works of art, initiated in Lviv by Jan Bołoz-Antoniewicz and formulated there anew by Podlacha, competed with Dvořák's ideas.⁴⁴ It was close to 'Expressionist' art history, since it assumed that all references to the external world, cultural background and spiritual currents that appeared in a given epoch would have been filtered through the soul of the artist.⁴⁵ Dvořák's concept was included in a part of that interpretation which presented the influence of the social environment (the *milieu*) on the production of paintings or sculptures.⁴⁶

According to Adam Małkiewicz, the *Kunstgeschichte als Geistesgeschichte*, as an independent method, 'merely to some degree influenced Molè, whereas it was only Lanckorońska who tried to apply it consistently in her research'.⁴⁷ This view requires rectification.

In 1932 Juliusz Starzyński published a critical review of Emile Mâle's *L'art religieux après le Concile de Trente*. The main point of his criticism was that Mâle had not taken into account the spiritual foundations from which the Catholic art of the Baroque originated.

³⁹ Józef Dutkiewicz, 'O metodę badań historii sztuki polskiej', *Biuletyn Historii Sztuki i Kultury* 5 : 1, 1937, 4.

⁴⁰ Ján Bakoš, 'From Universalism to Nationalism. Transformation of Vienna School Ideas in Central Europe', in *Discourses and Strategies*, 142-144.

⁴¹ Dutkiewicz, 'O metodę badań historii sztuki polskiej', 8.

⁴² Bakoš, 'From Universalism to Nationalism', 134.

⁴³ Szydłowski, *Spór o Giotto*, 34.

⁴⁴ Ksawery Piwocki, 'Lwowskie środowisko historyków sztuki', in *Sztuka żywa. Szkice z teorii i metodyki historii sztuki*, Wrocław, Warsaw and Cracow: Ossolineum, 1970, 169-171 and 174-178.

⁴⁵ Podlacha, 'Historia sztuki, jej założenia i metody badawcze', 77-78; Podlacha, 'Historja sztuki a historja kultury', 7-8. For a definition of 'Expressionist' art history, see Kimberly A. Smith, 'Introduction', in Kimberly A. Smith, ed., *The Expressionist Turn in Art History. A Critical Anthology*, London and New York: Routledge, 2017, 3.

⁴⁶ Podlacha, 'Historia sztuki, jej założenia i metody badawcze', 78.

⁴⁷ Małkiewicz, 'Polska historia sztuki wobec „szkoły wiedeńskiej”', 75.

Starzyński argued that 'a need for exhaustive iconographic research on the art of the Baroque has recently acquired special prominence, along with a widespread rejection of the purely formal approach to the history of art and a search for the deepest historical and cultural as well as spiritual foundations of artistic development'.⁴⁸ Mâle apparently conceived of the end of the sixteenth and the entire seventeenth century as a whole, whereas, according to Starzyński, 'the above period encompasses [...] the life and works of a number of generations, which clearly differed from one another in their religious and emotional structure, and whose attitudes towards the supernatural were inherently different'.⁴⁹ Each of these generations, in Starzyński's opinion, had created a distinct, but internally uniform, spiritual culture. The first generation, contemporary to the Council of Trent, had been influenced by the 1527 sack of Rome and consequently departed from sensuality, rationalism and classicism, shifting towards a new spirituality and expression of profound religious experiences. This resulted in the emergence of Mannerism, which used expressive deformation, visible in the works of El Greco, Tintoretto and Parmigianino.⁵⁰

A polemic with Starzyński's review was written by Karolina Lanckorońska. She pointed out that Mannerism should not be treated *en bloc* as a manifestation of religiosity:

The style of Parmigianino, for example, reveals close affinities with ancient art and is at the same time a monumentalisation of Correggio's movement and sentimentality, and consequently one can hardly accept the mention of this master along with El Greco. Religious paintings by Jacopino del Conte, Vasari, the Zuccaris and Bronzino were more often than not intended to solve some formal problems, to amplify the style of Michelangelo. As far as their content is concerned, the literary aspect very often dominates over the religious one, especially in the case of the Florentine-Roman group.⁵¹

A comparison of these texts of Starzyński and Lanckorońska reveals that the former was under the influence of Dvořák (although Starzyński also supplemented Dvořák's ideas with other reading: Pinder's theory of artistic generations and Walter Friedländer and Werner Weisbach's view of Baroque spirituality).⁵² It was, after all, Dvořák who had perceived the existence of two contradictory currents in the culture of the second half of the sixteenth century: a rationalistic and a spiritualistic one. With the latter he associated Mannerist art, in which he included, indiscriminately, Michelangelo, Parmigianino,

⁴⁸ Juliusz Starzyński, 'U podstaw religijnej sztuki baroku (Uwagi z powodu dzieła – Emile Mâle: L'art religieux après le Concile de Trente, Paris 1932)', *Biuletyn Naukowy* 1 : 2, 1932, 86.

⁴⁹ Starzyński, 'U podstaw religijnej sztuki baroku', 90.

⁵⁰ Starzyński, 'U podstaw religijnej sztuki baroku', 90–91.

⁵¹ Karolina Lanckorońska, 'Przyczynki do badań nad religijną sztuką baroku. Uwagi z powodu dzieła: E. Mâle: L'art religieux après le Concile de Trente. Paris 1932 oraz recenzji tego dzieła J. Starzyński, U podstaw religijnej sztuki baroku. *Biuletyn Naukowy* z. 2, r. 1', *Biuletyn Historii Sztuki i Kultury* 2 : 2, 1933, 156.

⁵² Wilhelm Pinder, *Das Problem der Generation in der Kunstgeschichte Europas*, Berlin: Frankfurter Verlags-Anstalt, 1928; Starzyński, 'U podstaw religijnej sztuki baroku', 91; Juliusz Starzyński, *Barokowe malowidła ścienne w kaplicy św. Karola Boromeusza w Łowiczu i twórca ich Michelangelo Palloni*, Warsaw: Politechnika Warszawska, 1931, 8.

Tintoretto and El Greco.⁵³ His *Kunstgeschichte als Geistesgeschichte* generalised and, in fact, tremendously simplified the image of that epoch, and it is these very features that were adopted by Starzyński. Lanckorońska, in turn, drew a diversified and nuanced picture of Italian art of the sixteenth century, a fact on which her contact with her informal teacher, Johannes Wilde, who wrote several attributional and analytical papers on individual works and particular artists (which Dvořák did not do), undoubtedly had some bearing.⁵⁴ Lanckorońska additionally demonstrated that Mannerist spiritualism must not be investigated without taking into account the Renaissance concept of the autonomy of art and the then increasing role of artistic personalities:

Raphael and Michelangelo were worshipped as demigods, and subsequent generations of artists did not intend to renounce their rights to artistic independence, even when confronted with the demands of the Church. So each of them undertook new challenges and found his own, individual solutions to them. Therefore, if we want to study this problem, we have to ask ourselves how the most eminent artists responded to it.⁵⁵

Thus, the art history practiced by Lanckorońska took into account the changes that had occurred in Vienna after Dvořák's death. It was Tietze who had already indicated the role of great artists in shaping the style of an epoch and how these artists expressed – in paintings, sculptures and buildings – the most important spiritual problems of their time.⁵⁶ A general turn towards eminent artists considered as subjects who produced excellent works of art was expressed by the supervisor of Lanckorońska's doctorate, Julius von Schlosser, who wrote explicitly, 'es gibt keine "Kunst", nur "Künstler"' ['there is no "art", only "artists"'].⁵⁷ So when Lanckorońska analysed the spiritual foundations of the art of Michelangelo or Tintoretto, she determinedly went beyond the sweeping statements characteristic of Dvořák and strove towards particulars. Not only did she take into account a general vision of an epoch, but included views of particular persons. Thus she found explanation for the specificity of Michelangelo's later works not in the Mannerist spiritualism, but in his concrete

⁵³ Dvořák, 'Über Greco und den Mannerismus', 271-273; Max Dvořák, *Geschichte der italienischen Kunst im Zeitalter der Renaissance. Akademische Vorlesungen*, Munich: R. Piper & Co., 1927, vol. 2, 192-193.

⁵⁴ Wilde supplemented his income in Vienna by teaching art history to children of well-to-do aristocrats, including Lanckorońska. Csilla Markója, 'János (Johannes) Wilde and Max Dvořák, or Can we speak of a Budapest school of art history?', *Journal of Art Historiography* 17, 2017, 10. On Wilde's activity as researcher see John Shearman, 'Johannes Wilde (1891-1970)', in Stefan Krenn and Martina Pippal, eds., *Wien und die Entwicklung der kunsthistorischen Methode*, 92-94.

⁵⁵ Karolina Lanckorońska, '"Paradiso" Tintoretta', *Prace Sekcji Historii Sztuki i Kultury Towarzystwa Naukowego we Lwowie* 2, 1935, 268-269; Karolina Lanckorońska, 'Przyczynki do badań nad religijną sztuką baroku', 154-155.

⁵⁶ Tietze, 'Geisteswissenschaftliche Kunstgeschichte', 52; Tietze, 'Die soziale Funktion der Kunst', 285-286.

⁵⁷ Julius von Schlosser, 'Ein Lebenskommentar', in Johannes Jahn, ed., *Die Kunstwissenschaft der Gegenwart in Selbstdarstellungen*, 125; Bakoš, '"Humanists" versus "Relativists"', 15-18.

contacts with the circle of Vittoria Colonna and in his adoption of the views professed in this circle.⁵⁸

Molè, although he had written a doctorate in Vienna under Strzygowski, stated in his memoirs that he felt more affinity with Dvořák. It follows from his writings as quoted by Lech Kalinowski that this affinity was mostly related to the same kind of sensitivity to art they both shared.⁵⁹ Additionally, Dvořák had helped Molè at the beginning of his career by securing for him, first a habilitation scholarship, and then a post in an office for the conservation of historic buildings in Split.⁶⁰ However, upon analysing Molè's scholarly output from the interwar period, one finds that in his research on the early Christian and Byzantine art of the Mediterranean lands and on Byzantine-Slavonic art as well as in his remarks and excurses on not only Graeco-Roman, but also Egyptian and Middle Eastern, antiquity, he constantly refers to Strzygowski. Although he did not share his former advisor's extreme concepts and conclusions, he consistently applied his comparative art history and was the only art historian in Poland the scope of whose research extended beyond European culture.⁶¹ In turn, he approached the *Kunstgeschichte als Geistesgeschichte* with reservations. He wrote: 'It has been rightly objected that Dvořák's principal formulation of art history as a history of the spirit, especially when used as a slogan, threatens to burst its framework because, from the point of view of the theory of knowledge, it means the end of art history as an independent branch of historical science'.⁶² Similar objections were voiced by Otto Benesch and Hans Tietze in Vienna, and by Szydlowski in Poland.⁶³

Molè was much closer to the concepts of Tietze and Schlosser than to those of Dvořák himself. Perhaps, when in the introduction to the first issue of the periodical he had established, the *Przegląd Historii Sztuki* [Review of Art History], he wrote about a crisis of art history stemming from 'the current intellectual foundations',⁶⁴ he had also Strzygowski and his book, *Die Krisis der Geisteswissenschaften*, in mind, but it was precisely Tietze who had given more ample treatment of the situation of crisis in the humanities and culture.⁶⁵ Molè had also published a paper entitled *Sztuka a społeczeństwo* [Art and Society] in which, as Tietze had done, he pointed to the role of both collective and individual factors related to the

⁵⁸ Karolina Lanckorońska, "'Zdjęcie z krzyża" Michała Anioła', *Dawna Sztuka* 2, 1939, 116–118; Karolina Lanckorońska, 'Uwagi o interpretacji "Sądu Ostatecznego" Michała Anioła', *Folia Historiae Artium* Seria Nowa 1, 1995, 91–93.

⁵⁹ Lech Kalinowski, 'Wojśław Molè 1886–1970', *Folia Historiae Artium* 11, 1975, 10.

⁶⁰ Kalinowski, 'Wojśław Molè 1886–1970', 7.

⁶¹ Małgorzata Smorąg Różycka, 'Wojśław Molè: między Strzygowskim a Rieglem i Dvořakiem', *Modus. Prace z Historii Sztuki* 12/13, 2013, 10–12. Incidentally, Strzygowski was held in fairly high esteem in Poland in the interwar period, see Małkiewicz, 'Polska historia sztuki wobec "szkoły wiedeńskiej"', 75–76.

⁶² Molè, *Historia sztuki starożytności i wczesnobizantyjskiej*, 19.

⁶³ Bakoš, "'Humanists" versus "Relativists"', 18; Szydlowski, *Spór o Giotta*, 32.

⁶⁴ Wojśław Molè, 'Słowo wstępne', *Przegląd Historii Sztuki* 1, 1929, 1. It was apparently under Molè's influence that also Starzyński wrote later about the crisis: 'O zadaniach nowoczesnej historii sztuki', 165.

⁶⁵ Josef Strzygowski, *Die Krisis der Geisteswissenschaften. Vorgeführt am Beispiele der Forschung über bildende Kunst*, Vienna: A. Schroll & Co., 1923; Tietze, *Verlebendigung der Kunstgeschichte*, 47 and 50–51; Lachnit, *Die Wiener Schule der Kunstgeschichte*, 105–106; Locher, *Kunstgeschichte als historische Theorie der Kunst*, 58.

talents of particular artists, in determining the development of art.⁶⁶ Like Tietze, he too emphasised the fact that stylistic forms develop according to internal, autonomous laws, which cannot be understood by means of sociological methods.⁶⁷

Molè's valorization of the role of great artists – in his memoirs he wrote: 'I was particularly interested in the genius who was truly creative and who opened up broad new perspectives'⁶⁸ – eventually bore fruit in the form of his own concept of artistic development. Since his attention to great artistic individualities was close to the ideas of Schlosser, it is no wonder that, when arguing that transformations in artistic creation resulted from the influence of 'dynamic' personalities, and that their achievements were subsequently taken up by 'static' artists, he employed the distinction between *Stilgeschichte* and *Sprachgeschichte* that had been made by Schlosser.⁶⁹

VI

It may be summed up that the importance of the Vienna school for establishing the foundations of art history as an independent discipline was recognised in Poland during the interwar period. Yet the term 'school' was hardly ever used, because more important than associations within one scholarly milieu were the general divisions into specialised fields of research. So, in the first place, there was a formal and stylistic approach and the *Kunstgeschichte als Geistesgeschichte*, sometimes supplemented by a third option: 'examination of the personality of the artist'⁷⁰, and it was only within this framework that actual names of particular methodologists, sometimes along with their affiliations, appeared. If an awareness of the existence of a scientific school consists of a defined methodology and an ideological core, along with a common genealogy and place and time of the activity of its representatives⁷¹, then in interwar Poland no one perceived the scholars associated with Vienna through such a lens. Wickhoff, Riegl and the young Dvořák were seen as legitimate representatives of the concept of *Kunstgeschichte als Formgeschichte*, as were Wölfflin and Schmarsow, while the *Kunstgeschichte als Geistesgeschichte* was treated simply as a new methodological proposal and was associated personally with Dvořák, and only rarely with Vienna.

Since the main core of Polish scholarship did not move beyond Sedlmayr's *erste Kunstwissenschaft*, no conclusions regarding the attitudes of the discipline were analysed or cited. In spite of the full awareness of the theoretical contributions of Riegl and Dvořák, references were made rather to the output of practical researchers, such as Pinder and Wilde, while models for research procedures were taken from Tietze's textbook and Podlacha's lectures. In fact it was only Dettloff who significantly referred directly to Riegl and the young Dvořák.

⁶⁶ Wojśław Molè, 'Sztuka a społeczeństwo. Uwagi historyka sztuki', *Nike* 1, 1937, 11–48, esp. 18.

⁶⁷ Molè, 'Sztuka a społeczeństwo', 26.

⁶⁸ After: Kalinowski, 'Wojśław Molè 1886–1970', 10.

⁶⁹ Vojeslav Molè, 'Umetnostna zgodovina in problem umetnikove osebnosti', *Slovenska Akademija Znanosti in Umetnosti v Ljubljani. Filozofsko-Filološko-Historični Razred. Rozprave* 2, 1944, 10.

⁷⁰ Starzyński, 'O zadaniach nowoczesnej historii sztuki', 164. He adopted the above division from Walter Passarge, *Die Philosophie der Kunstgeschichte in der Gegenwart*, Berlin: Junker und Dünhaupt, 1930, 90–97.

⁷¹ Zbysław Muszyński, 'Siedem cech głównych szkoły naukowej', *Filozofia Nauki* 3 : 1/2, 1995, 64.

Kunstgeschichte als Geistesgeschichte in its pure form was not particularly popular in Poland. This concept was closest to Starzyński, who had discovered elements of genius in the works of Dvořák,⁷² while other scholars were more eager to draw from the works of his disciples and successors than from those of the master himself. In Lviv, Podlacha developed the psychological interpretation of the work of art, but including only partly within its scope investigation into the spiritual foundations of an epoch.

There is no trace of any of Polish scholars' taking interest in the so-called younger school of Vienna.⁷³ No one was inspired by Sedlmayr or Otto Pächt; nobody quoted Meyer Schapiro, who polemicised with them. No article or book betrays any influence of structural analysis or gestalt psychology, either. Even Podlacha remained deaf to these trends and only Molè once recorded in a footnote Sedlmayr's paper on the *strenge Kunstwissenschaft*, considering it an interesting idea – a fact which, however, had no consequences.⁷⁴

The silence on the younger school of Vienna, combined with only the slightest interest in the circle of Warburg – with which only Zofia Ameisenowa (herself on the periphery of the Cracow art-historical milieu, working as a keeper of prints at the Jagiellonian Library)⁷⁵ maintained contacts – and with the fact that only Molè extended his research to extra-European art, shows the scope within which art history functioned in interwar Poland. It was limited to stylistic research supported by analyses of written sources and iconographic identifications, from time to time garnished with an interpretation of the *Kunstgeschichte als Geistesgeschichte* kind. The Viennese scholars were not perceived as a school but as initiators of or contributors to particular methodological currents, who had laid down the foundations of the discipline.

This specific situation had direct bearings on the development of Polish art history after the 1939-45 war. The strong position of stylistic and formal studies made this approach a core procedure which has been employed until the present day. And the failure to take note of the younger school of Vienna, in turn, resulted in an almost complete lack of interest in and understanding of the *Ikonic* of Max Imdahl and hermeneutics as methods arising from gestalt psychology and Sedlmayr's structural analysis.⁷⁶

Wojciech Bałus is an art historian, professor at the Institute of Art History of the Jagiellonian University in Cracow. His field of study includes the theory and history of art from the

⁷² Starzyński, 'Z powodu artykułu K. Lanckorońskiej', 162, note 1; Starzyński, 'O zadaniach nowoczesnej historii sztuki', 164.

⁷³ Artur Rosenauer, 'Zur neuen Schule der Kunstgeschichte', in Harald Olbrich, ed., *L'Art et des révolutions. Section 5: Révolution et évolution de l'Histoire de l'Art de Warburg à nos jours*, Strasbourg: Société Alsacienne pour le Développement de l'Histoire de l'Art, 1992, 73–83; Christopher S. Wood, 'Introduction', in Christopher S. Wood, ed., *The Vienna School Reader. Politics and Art Historical Method in the 1930s*, New York: Zone Books, 2000, 32–43; Bakoš, "'Humanists" versus "Relativists"', 21-23.

⁷⁴ Molè, 'Sztuka a społeczeństwo', 17.

⁷⁵ Magdalena Kunińska, 'In Search of the Jewish Identity: Zofia Ameisenowa and Research into Jewish Iconography and its Place in Polish Art History Discourse', in Jerzy Malinowski et al., eds., *Art in Jewish Society*, Warsaw and Toruń: Polski Instytut Badań nad Sztuką Świata, 2016, 255.

⁷⁶ Evidence of this may be the total indifference of art historians to Rudolf Arnheim's *Art and Visual Perception*, published in Polish in 1978. The book, however, found a wide resonance among artists and architects.

Wojciech Bałus

The place of the Vienna school of art history in Polish art
historiography of the interwar period

nineteenth century till today. Recently published *Gotik ohne Gott? Zur Symbolik des
Kirchengebäudes im 19. Jahrhundert* (Frankfurt am Main 2016).

wojciech.balus@uj.edu.pl



This work is licensed under a [Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial 4.0
International License](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/4.0/)