

Arnold Hauser, Walter Benjamin and the mythologization of history

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Introduction

There are conspicuous parallelisms — and symmetries — between the scholarly fates of Walter Benjamin and Arnold Hauser. While the first failed to attain any sort of success during his lifetime,¹ the latter's instant widespread diffusion went hand in hand with an ambiguous academic reception. However, if Benjamin posthumously grew to become a major author associated with the Frankfurt School,² Hauser remained an outsider, whose figure has, ever since, faded and re-emerged with dubious fortune.³ In spite of opposite lucks, both authors were marked by a strong anti-positivistic attitude which sought to establish a distinct methodology for the social sciences, striving to understand the present through art criticism. Departing from broad considerations of their philosophical backgrounds, this paper will illustrate their similarities and differences by examining shared accusations that weight on them: their controversial forms of Marxism point to a particular conception of mediations as leaps, and of ideology in terms of psychoanalytic rationalization. Comparing their concepts for totality, the purpose that guided them, and some significant affinities in process of inquiry, writing style, and choice of

¹ George Steiner, 'Introduction', in Walter Benjamin, *The Origin of the German Tragic Drama*, trans. John Osborne (original German title: *Ursprung des deutschen Trauerspiels*), Verso, 2003 [Original German text published in 1924; all subsequent original dates of publication will be added in brackets], 7-24, 11.

² Although Benjamin never managed to formally enter the academic framework, and was never a hired professor in the Frankfurt Institute for Social Research, its journal — the *Zeitschrift für Sozialforschung* — did publish some of his works during his lifetime, and he did receive some funds from the institution — thanks to Adorno and Horkheimer — with which he struggled to survive.

³ Almost every inquiry on Hauser addresses this situation. To give a few examples: David Wallace, 'Art, Autonomy and Heteronomy: The Provocation of Arnold Hauser's 'The Social History of Art'', *Thesis Eleven*, Number 44, 28-46. Massachusetts Institute of Technology, 1996; John O'Brian, 'Greenberg on Hauser: The Art Critic as Book Critic', *AE: Canadian Aesthetics Journal*, Vol. 14, Canadian Society for Aesthetics, Fall 2008; Andrew Hemingway, 'Introduction', *Marxism and the History of Art*, Pluto Press, London and Ann Harbor, 2006, and 'Arnold Hauser: Between Marxism and Romantic Anti-Capitalism', *Enclave Review*, 6-10, Fall 2014; Daria Saccone, *Arnold Hauser (1892-1978), biografía intelectual de un marxista romántico*, Tesis Doctorales UPF, Barcelona, 2015; Jim Berryman, 'Gombrich's critique of Hauser's Social History of Art', *History of European Ideas*, Vol. 43, Issue 5, 494-506, September 2017.

subject-matter, it becomes apparent that their art criticism handles historical narrative as myths, rendering their methods close to psychoanalytical dream interpretation.

Antipositivism, experiential totality and art criticism

Their antipositivism is a broad —yet significant— generality. The attitude characterized as ‘antipositivistic’ is linked to methodologies which try to grasp totality, —the ‘macroscopic’—, in opposition to those which deal only with facts —the ‘microscopic’.⁴ This methodological differentiation could be best introduced by referring to Theodor W. Adorno’s words regarding Hauser’s *The Social History of Art* (1951):

One usually attributes the lack of ... ‘great syntheses’ in the domain of contemporary social science and in the humanities to the increasing accumulation of material. The scholar is responsible for a degree of detailed knowledge, which denies him an overall view of the whole within his discipline and forces him into the form of the monograph. This view is all too reminiscent of the dubious promise that one day, when it has carried its research far enough, sociology will achieve an insight into the social totality; and in view of this resemblance it is difficult to have too much confidence in such a promise.⁵

Adorno alludes here to the pretensions of Auguste Comte’s positivism, which founded a sociology based on the premise of such ‘dubious promise’. He feared that, in emulating the natural sciences, the social sciences would only achieve fragmentation, limiting themselves to infinitely accumulate knowledge —however accurate— in separate, specialized fields, postponing synthesis to an ever-distant future. The same idea echoes in Hauser, who in *The Sociology of Art* (1974) stated that ‘to ignore the role which the unity and totality of society plays in all human endeavor makes life and culture senseless’,⁶ and in *The Philosophy of Art History* (1958) expressed:

The sociologist ... can only feel uneasy about any too radical separation of art and science. For after all, the world-view of a generation —or, more exactly, of a group that is historically and socially self-contained— is an indivisible whole. Attempts to

⁴ The distinction between ‘microscopic’ and ‘macroscopic’ methodologies is used by Vera L. Zolberg in her work *Constructing a sociology of the arts*, Cambridge University Press, 1997 [1990], 18.

⁵ Theodor W. Adorno, ‘Sociology of Art and Music’, in *Aspects of Sociology*, trans. John Viertel, Boston, Beacon Press, 1973 [1953], 102.

⁶ Arnold Hauser, *The Sociology of Art*, trans. Kenneth J. Northcott (original German title: *Sociologie der Kunst*), Routledge & Kegan Paul. London, Henley and Melbourne, 2011 [1974], 17.

demarcate the different fields in which this world-view manifests itself may be very promising from the epistemological point of view, but to the sociologist they appear as violent dissections of the reality he studies. To him, philosophy, science, law, custom, and art are different aspects of one unitary attitude to reality: in all these forms men are searching for an answer to the same question, for a solution to one and the same problem of how to live.⁷

The object of study, although it is referred to through a great variety of concepts — ‘totality’, ‘society’, ‘worldview’ — ultimately implies inquiring into the ‘solution given to the problem of how to live’. Benjamin thought, as did Hauser, that demarcating fields of specialization improves accumulation in the autonomous spheres; but this process of progressive autonomization contributes to what these authors called the ‘reification of knowledge’: accuracy of details comes at the expense of the capacity of synthetical interpretation, which is delayed, bringing also the stiffening of methodology, all of which Adorno described in terms of paralysis.⁸ As Jürgen Habermas recalls, Benjamin expressed a similar distress towards knowledge-accumulation:

“Cultural history, to be sure, increases the weight of the treasure which accumulates on the back of humanity. Yet cultural history does not provide the strength to shake off this burden in order to be able to take control of it”.⁹ It is precisely here that Benjamin sees the task of criticism.¹⁰

Benjamin, as Hauser, thought that the social sciences should have practical goals; they should help us know how to live. As knowledge renders itself unattainable through the might of its sheer quantity, it is only through the development of criticism, of critical method, that the mechanistic process of scientific accumulation can be countered. Criticism of what, though? Both Benjamin and Hauser saw art as a source of knowledge, but neither of them judged it strictly in terms of Marxist critique of ideology.¹¹ How could interpreting art — renouncing

⁷ Arnold Hauser, *The Philosophy of Art History*, (original German title: *Philosophie der Kunstgeschichte*), Routledge, 2018 [first German edition in 1958; first English translation in 1959], 20.

⁸ Theodor W. Adorno, Hans Albert, Ralf Dahrendorf, Jürgen Habermas, Harald Pilot and Karl Popper, *The Positivist Dispute in German Sociology*, trans. Glyn Adey and David Frisby, Heinemann Educational Books Ltd, 1977 [1969], 16-19.

⁹ Habermas is quoting from ‘Eduard Fuchs: Collector and Historian’, trans. Knut Tarnowski, *New German Critique*, No. 5 (Spring, 1975) [1937], 27-58.

¹⁰ Jürgen Habermas, ‘Consciousness-Raising or Redemptive Criticism: The Contemporaneity of Walter Benjamin’, *New German Critique*, No. 17, *Special Walter Benjamin Issue* (Spring, 1979), 30-59, 32.

¹¹ Michael Rosen has noted how Adorno’s critical theory stems from Benjamin’s early influence. However, Adorno’s theories opened the way to the New Art History’s critique of ideology — which also drew from Louis Althusser’s systemization of Marxism —, while Benjamin’s redemptive criticism remained estranged and misunderstood (Michael Rosen,

the principal role attributed to it by other Marxists as a critique of ideology — be a means for knowledge? Anna Wessely's incisive review of Hauser's oeuvre strongly addressed this point:¹²

As to the connection between the cognitive and the aesthetic values of an artwork, Hauser cleverly manoeuvres his way around the horns of the dilemma that vexed Marxist theoreticians. He claims a cognitive function for art in spite of its ideological character, insisting that “it would be wrong to deny art all claim of achieving truth, to deny that it can make a valuable contribution to our knowledge of the world and of man”.¹³ At the same time, he maintains that the dichotomy of true and false does not apply to art. Artworks aspire to aesthetic validity only, which is “utterly different from validity in science”.¹⁴ The “value of knowledge gained and propagated by art”, we are told, “is not at all impaired by its ideological character”.¹⁵ The nature of this knowledge remains a mystery.¹⁶

According to Wessely, Hauser left the answer to this question unarticulated, resolving to ‘platitudes or puzzling oracles’ when formulating his sociological theories on art.¹⁷ It is perhaps symptomatic of the affinity between Hauser and Benjamin that Hauser's intentions could be clarified resorting to Benjamin's thinking:

Already at the time when Benjamin, as a student, still believed he could sketch the “Program of Coming Philosophy”, the concept of an unmutated experience stood at the center of his considerations. At that time Benjamin directed his polemic against an “experience reduced as it were to degree zero, to the minimum of significance”, i. e., against the experience of physical objects

‘Benjamin, Adorno, and the decline of the aura’, in *The Cambridge Companion to Critical Theory*, Cambridge University Press, 2004, 40-41). We should thereby differentiate between Benjamin's ‘criticism’, Adorno's ‘critical theory’, and the subsequent methodologies based on ‘critique of ideology’ performed by the German and Anglophone New Left, such as Otto Werckmeister and T. J. Clark.

¹² We can find a more recent, diametrically opposed account of Hauser's conception of art as source of knowledge in Axel Gelfert's ‘Art history, the problem of style, and Arnold Hauser's contribution to the history and sociology of knowledge’, *Studies in East European Thought*, Mar 2012, Vol. 64 n° 1/2, 121, 2012.

¹³ Wessely is quoting from Hauser's *The Philosophy of Art History*, 20.

¹⁴ Hauser, *The Philosophy of Art History*, 24.

¹⁵ Hauser, *The Philosophy of Art History*, 24.

¹⁶ Anna Wessely, ‘The Reader's Progress: Remarks on Arnold Hauser's Philosophy of Art History’, in *Science, Mind and Art: Essays on Science and the Humanistic Understanding in Art, Epistemology, Religion and Ethics*, eds. Kostas Gavroglu, John Stachel, and Marx W. Wartofsky, 29-43, Kluwer, Dordrecht, 1995, 40.

¹⁷ Wessely, ‘The Reader's Progress’, 40.

underlying the paradigmatic orientation of Kant's attempt to analyze the conditions of possible experience.¹⁸ In opposition to this Benjamin defends the more complex types of experience common to primitive peoples and madmen, seers and artists. He still had hopes of recovering from metaphysics a systematic continuum of experience. Later he imputed this task to the critique of art; this critique should transpose the beautiful into the medium of truth, wherein "truth is not an unveiling, which annihilates the mystery, but a revelation and a manifestation that does it justice"¹⁹

Benjamin is confident that complex experience will reveal more about the complexity of experience itself than the 'simple case', isolated under laboratory conditions, of experiencing physical objects as proposed by Kant. Symptoms of the same attitude can be found in Hauser's argument, throughout the preface to *Mannerism* (1964), that complex issues must be dealt with in an accordingly complex manner.²⁰ In both authors, criticism strives to obtain from art, from the consideration of aesthetic value —or 'the beautiful'— a deeper knowledge about a more general — and complex— realm. In Hauser's case, the 'sociological' and the 'psychological' are, as in Benjamin, embedded in the experiential, which addresses the wholeness of subject, however fictional: the concept of 'worldview' (*Weltanschauung*) as used by Hauser accounts for Benjamin's 'truth of un mutilated experience' for a social group or individual, and through the concept of 'style' performs a similar function to Benjamin's general concepts of 'ur-history' (*Ur-geschichte*) and 'now-time' (*Jetztzeit*). The three are highly esoteric, since the thorough demonstration and clarification of the full chain of mediations —pondering the causation of all the facts and events involved— is not important for interpreting them out of a given historical situation. Perhaps, if the nature of art's cognitive value 'remains a mystery', this has to do with the fact that the nature of this interpretation is 'not an unveiling, which annihilates the mystery, but a revelation and a manifestation that does it justice'.

¹⁸ Habermas is quoting from Benjamin's *Gesammelte Schriften*, I-IV, eds. Rolf Tiedemann and Hermann Schweppenhäuser, Frankfurt am Main, 1972, 159.

¹⁹ Habermas, 'Consciousness-Raising or Redemptive Criticism', 44. Habermas is quoting Benjamin's *The Origin of the German Tragic Drama*, translated from the German by John Osborne, (London, 1977), 31. We will be using the 2003 edition of that translation, which has an 'Introduction' by George Steiner. There is a more recent translation by Howard Eiland (*The Origin of the German Trauerspiel*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, Massachusetts, And London, 2019 [1924]), which 'attempts to approximate the original German diction and syntax more closely than does Osborne's version, without sacrificing idiomaticity' (Eiland, 'Translator's Note', par. 14). As the interest of this paper remains more general, and Benjamin's text is not quoted extensively, Osborne's version will be used.

²⁰ Arnold Hauser, *Mannerism: the Crisis of the Renaissance and the Origin of Modern Art*, trans. in collaboration with the author by Eric Mosbacher (original German title: *Der Ursprung der modernen Kunst und Literatur: Die Entwicklung des Manierismus seit der Krise der Renaissance*), Routledge & Kegan Paul, London, 1965 [1964], xviii.

Philosophical background

Benjamin and Hauser can be identified as members of the same intellectual generation, as sharing a similar philosophical background. Both authors, born in 1892, developed a neo-Kantian outlook and were deeply affected by the philosophy of Georg W. F. Hegel, finally incorporating, through various influences,²¹ elements from Marxism and psychoanalysis. In Benjamin's case, his philosophy has been described as 'draw[ing] on three very different sources: German Romanticism, Jewish messianism and Marxism', not being a 'combinatorial or an eclectic 'synthesis' of these three (apparently) incompatible perspectives, but ... the invention of a new and profoundly original conception on the basis of all of them'.²² Hauser's work has also been labelled as a mixture of German Romanticism and Marxism.²³ In both cases, their self-proclamation as Marxists has proved misleading, producing an ever-problematic categorization of their work. Their use of Karl Marx's philosophy was deeply pragmatic and embedded in purposes which distanced them from György Lukács as much as from the later Marxist generations which are commonly referred to as 'New Art History', and whose work revolves, in many stances, around the critique of ideology. But ideology as such did not, apparently, play such an exclusive role for Hauser:

The difficulty lies, as Engels recognized, in having to explain how these alleged unconscious, extra-psychological motives "go through the heads" of the men concerned. Marx's solution is as little satisfying as Hegel's. Freud finds an answer to the question, but one that fits only the limited slice of life which interests him.²⁴

Hauser finds unsatisfactory all attempts to reduce the way we are influenced by our circumstances to any single concept. Nevertheless, he does take note of various attempts to do so:

According to Bergson's philosophy, speech is the mask of thought, just as, according to Marx's sociology, science, being ideologically

²¹ In both cases, György Lukács plays an important role. Pre-Marxist Lukács deeply influenced Hauser in the meetings of the Sunday Circle (1915-1918). When, through the events of the short-lived Hungarian Soviet Republic (1919), Lukács embraced communism, Hauser remained — as Karl Mannheim — politically skeptic, but was nevertheless influenced by this theoretical turn. Benjamin, who had also read and quoted pre-Marxist Lukács, came to his own Marxist turn influenced by Latvian theatre director and actress Asja Lācis at the time he was reading Lukács' *History and Class Consciousness* (George Steiner, 'Introduction' to Benjamin's *The Origin of the German Tragic Drama*, 10). Nevertheless, some have pointed out that Bertolt Brecht's influence on Benjamin was greater than Lukács' (Terry Eagleton, *Walter Benjamin or Towards a Revolutionary Criticism*, Verso Editions and NLB, 1981, 22).

²² Michael Löwy, *Fire Alarm: Reading Walter Benjamin's 'On the Concept of History'*, trans. Chris Turner, Verso, 2005 [2001], 4.

²³ Hemingway, 'Arnold Hauser: Between Marxism and Romantic Anti-Capitalism'; Saccone, *Arnold Hauser*.

²⁴ Hauser, *The Philosophy of Art History*, 78.

conditioned, is the distortion of truth, and just as, according to Freud's psychology, the apparent life of the soul is a concealment of its real motivation. All these concepts — the romantic-idealist concept of form, the historical-materialist concept of ideology, the psychoanalytic concept of rationalization — derive from a certain type of psychology — a 'psychology of exposure' — ... According to this psychology, health is to be found only along a road that leads away from objective forms and ossified conventions back to spontaneity, immediacy, and authenticity of soul. Yet neither the diagnosis nor the therapy recommended is altogether convincing.²⁵

The road that leads 'back to spontaneity, immediacy, and authenticity of soul', that is, therapies based on health-through-unveiling and catharsis — be it psychological catharsis or social revolution —, which are of key importance for Freud as well as for many forms of Marxism based on a critique of ideology, is not given much credit by Hauser, who does not believe in such a state of harmonious purity.²⁶ He identifies this with the pretension of solving the mysteries of life once and for all by resorting to a one-sided solution, a tendency to simplification which owes much to the positivist heritage in them.²⁷ On the contrary, in Marx's and Freud's tendency to refer to the materiality of, respectively, economic and biological reality, he sees the valuable contribution of positivism. His theory is not exclusively built upon form, ideology, or rationalization, but incorporates them as tools. Regarding Benjamin's reception of Marxism, Habermas stated that

he had to bring [Marxism] together with the messianic interpretation of history he developed on the model of redemptive criticism. This domesticated historical materialism was supposed to provide an answer for the open question concerning the subject of the history of art and culture, an answer which was to be materialist and yet compatible with Benjamin's own theory of experience. To believe this had been successfully accomplished, was an error on Benjamin's part — and the wish of his Marxist friends.²⁸

Habermas places Benjamin's 'theory of experience' at the core of his 'model of redemptive criticism'. Marxism is, as in Hauser, a domesticated tool that addressed some aspects of the 'subject of experience'. In relation to this, Michael Rosen stressed that the 'most important of the continuities between Benjamin's early and mature thought is his allegiance to a distinctive form of Kantian philosophy',

²⁵ Hauser, *The Philosophy of Art History*, 151.

²⁶ In *Mannerism*, for example, he defends Georg Simmel's 'tragedy of culture' against Karl Marx's romanticization of feudal craftsmanship (Hauser, *Mannerism*, 99-100).

²⁷ Hauser explicitly asserted this for both Marxism and psychoanalysis (Hauser, *The Philosophy of Art History*, 76-77).

²⁸ Habermas, 'Consciousness-Raising or Redemptive Criticism', 50.

whose 'Copernican revolution' could be best defined as 'a turn[ing] away from purporting to investigate the nature of reality, towards an investigation of our experience of that reality'.²⁹ As experience is not reducible to reason or the senses, Kant's antidogmatic scepticism is directed against any single source of knowledge, lying at the centre of what Adorno called his 'epistemological constitutive question', namely, 'that of the possibility of science'³⁰. Regarding Hauser, Deodáth Zuh states that his 'epistemological tenets are mostly of Kantian origin',³¹ something which Hauser himself stressed with recurrence:³²

The Kantian philosophy offers a much more realistic account of the trouble and a much more promising attempt to remedy it. According to Kant, we do not have to unveil a spiritual 'thing-in-itself', but to recognize that the forms within which all thinking, feeling, and acting move are limitations upon, and also enabling conditions for, the functioning of the mind. When we can see only with spectacles, it is not only senseless to discourse upon the distorting effect of spectacles, but also useless to spend much time speculating what seeing without spectacles would be like. However narrow may be the limits which art's conventional means of expression set for the portrayal of actual living experience, it is through them alone that a way is opened up to what would otherwise be utterly inaccessible. Obviously the sign is not the thing itself, yet we know of the thing only through the sign.³³

Kant's dove, which is able to fly due to the air's resistance, or Wilhelm Dilthey's remark that we can understand history because of our own historical nature, are other ways to express the same idea. Hauser's conception of ideology is modelled after the concept of rationalization, and not otherwise: we could say that it coincides with Karl Mannheim's 'general conception' of it — all ideology is false³⁴ — as opposed to Lukács' and other Marxists' conception of ideology as divided between 'correct' (or 'progressive') and 'false' (or 'reactionary') ideologies. Ideology, just as the psychoanalytical rationalization of biological urges, is not an illness that

²⁹ Rosen, 'Benjamin, Adorno, and the decline of the aura', 41.

³⁰ Adorno et al., *The Positivist Dispute*, 17.

³¹ Deodáth Zuh, 'Arnold Hauser and the multilayer theory of knowledge', *Studies in East European Thought*, Vol. 67 Issue 1/2, 41, June 2015, 2.

³² Hauser affirms the importance of Kant's Copernican turn in three of the four books by which he is widely known (Hauser, *The Philosophy of Art History*, 99, 151; *Mannerism*, 46, 90-1; *The Sociology of Art*, 26, 187, 341), and he equates ideology and rationalization, relativizing the importance of both, already in his first major work (Hauser, *The Social History of Art*, trans. in collaboration with the author by Stanley Godman, [original title in German: *Sozialgeschichte der Kunst und Literatur*], Routledge, 2005 [1951], Volume IV, 140).

³³ Hauser, *The Philosophy of Art History*, 151.

³⁴ Swanson, 'Marx, Weber, and the Crisis of reality in Arnold Hauser's sociology of art', 2201-2202.

can be cured — a point that Hauser already made in *The Social History of Art*³⁵ and reiterated later.³⁶ Nonetheless, both concepts provide the means to understand the distortion they impose on the subject of experience: although there is no ‘right’ way to see — no ‘correct’ ideology — it is possible to better understand the limits imposed on our perspective — we can get to *know ourselves*. Placing Kant as its bedrock, Zuh explains Hauser’s theories as a cogent ‘multilayer theory of knowledge’:

As a Kantian, he tried to take into account the philosophical consequences of two (or even more) different sources of cognition that are equal in value, correlative and necessarily cooperating. Giving exclusive priority to only one of these leads to classical philosophical errors such as psychologism and intellectualism. As a Marxist, Hauser was anti-dogmatic and anti-deterministic, because he adopted an interpretive-hermeneutical meaning of Marxism and considered it an aid against distorting tendencies in our thinking. His basic insight that the different sources of value-equal and cooperating cognitive layers are in an everyday-life perspective intertwined, so that a kind of *reservatio mentalis* is needed to methodically separate them for the sake of better understanding, makes him a distant relative of classical phenomenology. This web of epistemological investigations is what I call the multilayer theory of knowledge.³⁷

In both Benjamin and Hauser, the instrumentalization of historical materialism and psychoanalysis by a broader theory of experience went hand in hand with conceiving the theoretical as a praxis not deprived of ethical or revolutionary value, a conception rooted in Marx’s notion that theory and praxis are indissoluble.³⁸ Perhaps it is precisely the ethical, revolutionary stance of Marxism, that which replaces Kant’s ethics in their Kantian philosophies: thus, the importance of the ‘Marxist’ label for both. Nonetheless, despite socialist political stances, they remained highly independent authors — at times isolated, both in theory and in praxis —, their work considered, altogether, as some sort of pioneering effort that failed to achieve both scientific and political value. Is it a consequence of the dialectical nature of their thinking that the acceptance of their success in any of the two implies the acceptance of their success in both? Benjamin’s ambiguous relation to Marxism resulted in Gershom Scholem’s following remarks:

³⁵ Hauser, *The Social History of Art*, Volume IV, 141, 212-213.

³⁶ Hauser, *The Philosophy of Art History*, 28-30.

³⁷ Zuh, ‘Arnold Hauser and the multilayer theory of knowledge’, 1.

³⁸ Although Hauser did differentiate between ‘theoretical’ and ‘political’ Marxism, explicitly denying his allegiance to its messianic tenets (Hauser, *The Sociology of Art*, 209-211), and resigning from all active political life, it is clear that he wanted to conceive of his own scholarly activity as part of the struggle against the relentless advance of a soulless world under capitalism (Saccone, *Arnold Hauser*, 316-317).

I disputed neither the special nature of your situation in a bourgeois world, nor your (self-evident) right to side with the revolution ... And you are, of course, correct in saying that your letter provides no answer to the issue I raised: namely, not that you are fighting, but that you are fighting under a disguise; that you issue a currency in your writing that you are increasingly simply incapable of redeeming, incapable precisely because of the most genuine and most substantial thing you have or are. I, of course, do not dispute that a person could possibly write like Lenin. I am attacking only the fiction of pretending to do this while doing something totally different. I would maintain that it is indeed possible to live in the tension of this ambiguity (indeed, this is precisely what I fear) but, to express it very harshly for once, the person who does so will be destroyed because — and this is a point on which I place the most weight as it pertains to you — the morality of any insights achieved in such an existence must degenerate.³⁹

Scholem wrote these words in 1931. In 1938, and also reviewing Benjamin's work for *The Arcades Project* (1927-1940), Adorno would be as harsh in a passage that did not go unnoticed for Habermas — who, as seen previously, also stated that Benjamin failed —:

I believe that this brings me to the heart of the matter. The effect emanating from your work as a whole, ... is that you have done violence to yourself in it, ... in order to pay a tribute to Marxism that does justice to neither you nor Marxism. It does not do justice to Marxism, because mediation by means of the total social process is missing and you almost superstitiously ascribe to the enumeration of materials a power of illumination, but this power is never reserved for a pragmatic reference but only for theoretical construction. It does not do justice to your most personal substance, since you have denied yourself your boldest and most productive thoughts in a kind of precensorship, even should it be in the form of a postponement, based on materialist categories (which in no way coincide with Marxist categories)⁴⁰

Here a comparison between Benjamin's *Arcades Project* and Hauser's *Mannerism* could be relevant. The sense of 'precensorship' or 'postponement' denounced by Adorno could be considered as analogous to Edwin Burgum's remark that Hauser's book 'represents the interesting tension between intention to write about Mannerism and an obsessive, contradictory demand not to do so', also

³⁹ Walter Benjamin, *The Correspondence of Walter Benjamin, 1910-1940*, ed. and annotated by Gershom Scholem and Theodor W. Adorno, trans. Manfred R. Jacobson and Evelyn M. Jacobson, The University of Chicago Press, London, 1994 [1910-1940], 379.

⁴⁰ Benjamin, *The Correspondence*, 583.

accusing him of having abandoned sociological considerations in favour of the psychological side of the question.⁴¹ Returning to Adorno's critique, he was weary of the notion of a 'collective unconscious' upon which Benjamin was constructing his 'ur-history of the nineteenth century'. Adorno considered Benjamin's argument to be immanentist, and thus, undialectical.⁴²

Certainly, more parallelisms could be drawn, since Hauser's dismissal by numerous art sociologists and historians follow arguments that are — attending each of their frameworks — similar in nature to Adorno's previous complaints. Firstly, a lack of the kind of systematization which provides the basis for scientific rigour — 'which in no way coincide with Marxist categories' —, a problem perhaps derived from merging concepts from heterogeneous sources.⁴³ Secondly, failing to truly engage politically, with results verging on the reactionary.⁴⁴ Thirdly, failing to clearly establish, demonstrate or elucidate a chain of mediations without 'superstitiously' jumping from one sphere to the other.

This last point could prove sufficiently confusing to demand some clarification, since Adorno did apparently approve of Hauser's macroscopic approach in *The Social History of Art*, while later authors — such as T. J. Clark — did not.⁴⁵ But would Adorno have approved of Hauser's notion, explicitly articulated in *The Sociology of Art*, that mediations cannot be theorized? Hauser even asserted their 'fictional' character.⁴⁶ Terry Eagleton, as with Adorno, defended the 'Hauserian brilliance' of his 'pioneering' *The Social History of Art*, but had strong reservations with his theoretical *summa*:

⁴¹ Edwin B. Burgum, 'Marxism and Mannerism: The Esthetic of Arnold Hauser', *Science and Society*, Vol. 32, nº 3, 307. New York, 1968, 317.

⁴² Benjamin, *The Correspondence*, 495-499

⁴³ Wessely, 'The Reader's Progress', 30: 'Hauser seems to have relied on his common sense to judge the plausibility of the various explanations which historians, critics, philosophers or artists proposed, while disregarding the significant differences in their theoretical premises'. Another example is found in Néstor García Canclini, *La producción simbólica: teoría y método en sociología del arte*, Siglo XXI Editores, 2006 [1979], 56, 59, 62.

⁴⁴ Burgum, 'Marxism and Mannerism', 315; García Canclini, *La producción simbólica*, 60; Terry Eagleton, 'Total interaction: The Sociology of Art, by Arnold Hauser', *TLS*, 4151, October 22 1982, 1168; Wessely, 'The Reader's Progress', 30, 41.

⁴⁵ In the introduction to his *Image of the People: Gustave Courbet and the 1848 Revolution* (Thames and Hudson Ltd, London, 1973), named 'On the Social History of Art', T. J. Clark defines the purpose of Marxist art history as elucidating the precise mediations present in a very short period — in other words, a methodology which would fit into the definition of monograph, and thus, microscopic, aiming at knowledge-precision of the chain of events that determine the ideological transferences between works of art and society. Apparently, in the 1981 English edition, he lamented the existence of Hauser's first book (Jonathan Harris, *The New Art History, a critical introduction*, Routledge, 2001, 66, 89). A decade later, Albert Boime — a follower of Clark's method — almost apologized for referring to Hauser while affirming that he aimed at 'catch[ing] some of the sweep of [his] seminal *Social History of Art*' (Boime, *Art in an age of revolution, 1750-1800*, The University of Chicago Press, 1987, xxiii).

⁴⁶ Hauser, *The Sociology of Art*, xxi.

The theoretical model with which Hauser works, here as elsewhere, is familiarly Hegelian-Marxist: social classes, born of economic struggle and seen as relatively cohesive entities, are history's dynamic agents, generating homogeneous forms of consciousness which in turn give rise to forms of art. It is a model crucially dependent on the Hegelian notion of 'mediation', not least if it is to avoid an intolerable reductiveness: but Hauser tells us rather abruptly, as early as his Preface, that he now believes the whole concept of mediation to be "fictional", and argues instead for the significance of untheorizable "leaps" from one level to another. How far his method can accommodate such mysterious leaps without scuppering itself entirely is a question the book fails adequately to answer.⁴⁷

For Eagleton, as well as for Burgum, Hauser seems to be acceptable, as long as he is considered a pioneering (but outmoded), orthodox Marxist — a view of his *Social History of Art* that defined the prologue to its 1999 edition.⁴⁸ To what extent does 'mediation' define approval, when Marxist authors assess other Marxist authors? How does 'mediation' relate to the 'critique of ideology'? Perhaps Benjamin and Hauser could be considered, despite their many differences, as similar, given how they both conceive of mediations as unavoidably mythological — or 'fictional' — in nature, as a concept constructed to fill a gap that is as unutterable as conscience itself, choosing to mediate facts, theories and interpretation through esoteric leaps.

The concept and role of mediation

'Where history and magic oscillate'

Having sketched, in a broad manner, some theoretical affinities between Benjamin and Hauser, it may be useful to define precisely in what sense do their strategies converge, or what procedures within their processes of inquiry could be compared as similar. But before turning to their particular methodologies in order to substantiate this comparison, it is appropriate to continue examining Adorno's assessment of each of their methods, and particularly, of the role mediations had in their respective critical discourses. In the case of Benjamin, Adorno's criticism concerning the advanced versions of the draft for *The Arcades Project* — set forth in the context of their private correspondence — built up, through a multitude of argumentations, towards the following severe remarks:

my objection by no means purely concerns the dubiousness of "abstaining" in relation to a subject that, precisely because of your ascetic attitude toward interpretation, appears to enter a realm to

⁴⁷ Eagleton, 'Total interaction', 1168.

⁴⁸ Jonathan Harris, 'General introduction' and 'Introduction' to each of the four volumes of Hauser's *The Social History of Art*; Volume I, xx.

which asceticism is opposed: where history and magic oscillate. Rather, I see the moments in which the text lags behind its own a priori as being closely related to its connection to dialectical materialism ... Let me express myself here in as simple and Hegelian manner as possible. If I am not mistaken, this dialectic lacks one thing: mediation. The primary tendency is always to relate the pragmatic content of Baudelaire's work directly to proximate characteristics of the social history of his time, and preferably economic characteristics when possible.⁴⁹

Here, as in the earlier passage, Adorno stresses to his friend the importance of mediations, which Benjamin resolves by leaps from material to interpretation without the aid of the 'social totality'. Benjamin jumps from one particular to another through a totality that is difficult to grasp, ascribing 'a power of illumination' to these obscure relations or correspondences. On the other hand, Adorno's evaluation of Hauser's procedure in *The Social History of Art* was quite different:

[Hauser's] method is dialectical in the most precise sense: he develops the artistic forms in all their differentiations and with all their mediations out of the social conditions, the conditions of labor as well as the relations of power of the various historical stages. To be sure, production asserts its primacy, but distribution and reception are kept in view: art is explained in terms of the social totality, and yet the specifics of place and of function of the individual phenomena are not neglected for its sake⁵⁰

These approving remarks are found in a lecture from the mid-fifties that was published decades later. In the correspondence between Hauser and Adorno, which has been described as an exchange 'of mutual flattery' in which 'little of intellectual substance is actually said',⁵¹ the difference of status renders Adorno's tone one of 'patrician largesse',⁵² while Hauser is cautious, given his need to find a job. A far more distant and cordial tone than in the correspondence between Benjamin and Adorno, which, as close friends, did discuss these issues in a more profound and bold manner. In any case, it may be affirmed that Adorno did approve of Hauser's method of critique because he did rely on the narrative of Marxist class struggle to interpret mediations through a concept of social totality. But Hauser did not rely so much on class struggle in *Mannerism*, where 'almost anything that occurred in the sixteenth-century in the way of economic, political, or religious crisis is held to be

⁴⁹ Benjamin, *The Correspondence*, 581.

⁵⁰ Adorno, 'Sociology of Art and Music', 102-3.

⁵¹ John Roberts, 'Arnold Hauser, Adorno, Lukács and the Ideal Spectator', in *Marxism and the History of Art: from William Morris to the New Left*, ed. Andrew Hemingway, 161, Pluto Press, 2006, 162.

⁵² Roberts, 'Arnold Hauser, Adorno, Lukács and the Ideal Spectator', 162.

characteristic of Mannerism',⁵³ in what has been labelled a return to his Romantic-idealist heritage — a return to Georg Simmel and the 'circular social whole' of Max Weber.⁵⁴ But did Hauser really change his concepts of mediation and social totality? It is not as obvious as it has been asserted. In various passages of his first work, Hauser already dismisses ideology as the only source of knowledge,⁵⁵ and while the book has been interpreted at times as a pioneer in the tradition of critique of ideology, other analyses suggest this critique of ideology was already serving a different purpose. As David Wallace states:

Yet what concerns Hauser is less the contemporary significance of past works of art than the relevance of the historically developing forms of artistic culture to the seemingly incompatible ideals of cultural democracy.⁵⁶

The totality that constitutes Hauser's object of study could be best defined as the dialectical relation between society and art,⁵⁷ understanding it as a dialectic

⁵³ Francis Haskell, 'Generalisations', *Encounter*, vol.25, n°1, 78-82. London, 1965, 79.

⁵⁴ Hemingway, 'Arnold Hauser', par. 31; Saccone, *Arnold Hauser*, 176, 182.

⁵⁵ This becomes apparent in his affirmation that Marxism is itself a product of bourgeois society, and in his accusations of dogmatism towards Marxist thinkers who dismiss psychoanalysis (Hauser, *The Social History of Art*, Volume IV, 140-2).

⁵⁶ Wallace, 'Art, Autonomy and Heteronomy', 29. He continues: 'It is this uneasy relationship between politics and art as conflicting spheres of activity within the social-historical, the space and time of modernity, that a 'social history of art' aims to interrogate.' In a similar manner, in *Utopic Modernism - Arnold Hauser between Exile and Utopia toward a Sociology of the Modern*, the monograph on Hauser edited by David Wallace and Jerry Zaslove in 1996 (which failed to find a publisher): 'moving from Budapest to Italy, Vienna, Berlin and finally London gave him the chance to interrogate and deepen the relationship of the 'new' art history that he was becoming familiar with and the sociology of the modern that he encountered in his own thinking and through Georg Lukacs, Ernst Bloch, Georg Simmel, Max Weber and most importantly Karl Mannheim. All were wrestling with the problem of a methodology for an art with its own history and the place of sociology of art and literature inside of a democratic, radical or 'utopian' outlook. ... His essayistic style of writing, his continuous interest in the film and alienated naturalism, and his acute sense that only in a man's inner psychic life can continuity be registered gives *The Social History of Art* its personal and historical meaning as a work that breaks the 'facade of an uninterrupted art history' where the art work simply illustrates conflict and crisis, will and reality. Hauser is determined to show that the artist sets the problem while the art historian and sociologist only reconstruct it as a problem of modernity'. Another account would be G. W. Swanson, 'Marx, Weber, and the Crisis of reality in Arnold Hauser's sociology of art', *The European Legacy: Toward New Paradigms*, 1:8, 1996, 2199: 'Guided by the primacy of this commitment to experience, whatever the costs to methodological consistency, he had to develop a sociological perspective appropriate to its object. This perspective, Hauser insists, is not transhistorical but specifically modern.'

⁵⁷ Wallace, 'Art, Autonomy and Heteronomy', 34-5, 39-40; Swanson, 'Marx, Weber, and the Crisis of reality in Arnold Hauser's sociology of art', 2203.

unity.⁵⁸ For Adorno, who criticizes the microscopic constrictions of neo-positivist sociology, the inquiry into mediations must be related to a macroscopic critical totality which makes analysis possible: the narrative defined by this totality accommodates mediations. If he regarded Benjamin's method in *The Arcades Project* differently than he did Hauser's in *The Social History of Art*, it is explicitly due to the differences between their respective totalities: while Hauser resorted to a Hegelian-Marxist scaffolding to interpret mediations and the dialectic unity 'art/social totality' through each other, Benjamin operated this hermeneutical reciprocity employing mystical concepts of his own invention: 'now-time' (*Jetztzeit*) and 'ur-history' (*Urgeschichte*), which, furthermore, were rooted in Jewish Kabbalah and explained recurring to a 'collective consciousness' which, according to Adorno, could not be distinguished from Carl G. Jung's homonymous concept,⁵⁹ an affinity which troubled him. As Benjamin gradually developed and sharpened his conception of these concepts in *The Arcades Project*, associating them with a dialectical conceptualization of 'dreams' and consciousness, Adorno voiced his concerns that Benjamin's method was becoming more and more immanent, and thus, less dialectical.⁶⁰ He saw Benjamin's materialist analysis as *a posteriori* incorporations to an immanentist interpretation that was fixed from the start — a complaint present, with special intensity, in other authors' reviews of Hauser's book on mannerism, where the circular nature of his analyses was more apparent.⁶¹ Or, in Wessely's words, in his 'preference for explanations of the "invisible hand" type'.⁶²

⁵⁸ In a dialectical unity the poles are indissoluble: art is, then, understood by Hauser in its widest sense: as indissoluble from society, and, like society, an aspect of mankind. Art did not begin with the Greeks; what begun with the Greeks was the process of losing the organic unity of spiritual values. A process that derived much later (in the sixteenth-century) in the autonomization, or reification of art (Hauser, *Mannerism*, 95).

⁵⁹ Although Benjamin did use the notion of a 'collective unconscious', what he meant by it was utterly different from Jung's use of the concept — some authors have pointed to the 'biologically inherited' nature of Jung's archetypes as a key difference (Daniel Mourenza, 'Awakening Images: Walter Benjamin's Concepts of History, Technology and Film', Paper Given in the Panel 'History and Militancy in Walter Benjamin,' on Friday 9th November in the 9th Annual Historical Materialism Conference, published online Nov 9, 2012 [URL: https://www.academia.edu/2639067/Awakening_Images_Walter_Benjamin_s_Concepts_of_History_Technology_and_Film], accessed 02/12/2019, 4). In Benjamin's view, 'the doctrine of archaic images' had for Jung an 'unequivocally regressive function' (Benjamin, *The Arcades Project*, 471). In order to 'secure systematically certain basic elements of the Paris Arcades', in 1937 'he was still intent on combining the attack on Jung with the Arcades Project', something which he was finally unable to fulfil (Frisby, *Fragments of Modernity*, 201).

⁶⁰ Benjamin, *The Correspondence*, 496-9.

⁶¹ William H. Halewood, 'Mannerism: The Crisis of the Renaissance and the Origin of Modern Art by Arnold Hauser', *History and Theory*, Vol. 7, No. 1, 90-102. Wiley, 1968, 99; W. Eugene Kleinbauer, *Modern Perspectives in Western Art History: An Anthology of Twentieth-century Writings on the Visual Arts*, 96-99. University of Toronto Press, Toronto, 1971, 97; Saccone, *Arnold Hauser*, 181.

⁶² Wessely, 'The Reader's Progress', 37.

It is, then, pertinent to consider how the conventional character of Hauser's concepts for totality might have helped in Adorno's enthusiastic assessment, as Benjamin's concepts are highly idiosyncratic. We know Adorno approved of *The Social History of Art*, but not his opinion of *Mannerism*, in which Hauser's philosophical framework is, according to some, more explicit.⁶³ Since other authors have condemned the book on mannerism as a manoeuvre to convey attention and fit better in the scholarly world,⁶⁴ opposite views arise: according to his supporters, Hauser perfected a multilayer theory of knowledge that still relied on Marxism as a tool by testing it on the extreme case of a highly problematic historical episode (mannerism);⁶⁵ according to his detractors, Hauser posed as a Marxist when he published his first book in order to convey attention and to avoid acknowledging that he had adopted —or was plagiarizing— Mannheim's sociology of knowledge, only to slowly dilute his Marxism later (starting with his second book) as scholarly status seemed at hand. Benjamin's shared history with Adorno shows a similar structure of disappointment: as Benjamin gradually reaches a methodology which, he feels, accurately reflects his thinking, his friend criticizes him harshly. Perhaps the congeniality of Hauser's acquaintance with Adorno was founded on a happy misunderstanding, but since Adorno never reviewed *Mannerism*, we can only speculate that it would have been cogent on his part to criticize certain aspects of it that are close to those he criticized in Benjamin's late work. There was a television broadcast on August 19th of 1965 — which would have included Adorno, Hauser, Gustav René Hocke, Franz Jaeger Wendt, and Benno Reif —, on the occasion of Hauser's *Mannerism*, in which Adorno could have stated his views on the book, but he finally was not able to attend the event.⁶⁶

The mythologization of history

Comparing totalities, purpose, process of inquiry, writing style and choice of subject-matter

Although called a 'philosopher' at times, it is rare to find Hauser crafting new concepts. This has provoked complaints verging on accusations of plagiarism, especially in relation to Karl Mannheim.⁶⁷ As it has been suggested, all his

⁶³ Zuh, 'Arnold Hauser and the multilayer theory of knowledge', 12.

⁶⁴ Burgum, 'Marxism and Mannerism', 318; Lee Congdon, 'Arnold Hauser and the Retreat from Marxism', *Essays on Wittgenstein and Austrian Philosophy: In Honour of J.C. Nyiri*, ed. Tamás Demeter, Rodopi, Amsterdam, 2004, 50-2, 56.

⁶⁵ It could be said that the concept of mannerism is not, as the general history of Western society and art, as susceptible of reductionist Marxist interpretations. Many interpreted Hauser's first book as essentially focused on class struggle, while it would be difficult to state the same thing about *Mannerism*.

⁶⁶ Neither was Gustav René Hocke. This is mentioned in two letters —July 26th and August 21st — from Hauser to his editor in C. H. Beck, Dr. Hans Richtscheid, which C. H. Beck's archive in Munich kindly facilitated to us.

⁶⁷ Wessely, 'The Reader's Progress', 40; Congdon, 'Arnold Hauser and the retreat from Marxism', 45, 46, 49, 51.

philosophical apparatus is an amalgam of romantic idealist philosophy and Marxism. On the contrary, Benjamin's incorporation of elements from Kabbalistic mysticism into his philosophical outlook constitutes a highly idiosyncratic achievement, almost as if he had crafted a whole methodology for himself. But perhaps it is permissible to assert that, besides the contrast between the highly conventional nature of Hauser's concepts and the originality of Benjamin's, both authors did craft a methodology for themselves — perhaps Adorno's approval of Hauser is, after all, related to the shallowness of their relation. It would be clarifying to compare some crucial aspects of their methodologies: their concepts of totality in relation to the overall purpose they set themselves, and their process of inquiry, writing style, and similar orientation of subject-matter.

Hauser's concepts of totality are highly conventional, stereotypic. The concept for society is the Lukácsian 'totality' (*Totalität*), but this concept is also used for the kind of knowledge that is expressed in art. In practice, however, 'style' is the central concept of his analyses, understanding it not as (merely) a formal definition, but as the expression of an attitude which could be best described resorting to the Diltheyan 'worldview' (*Weltanschauung*) or the Hegelian 'spirit of the age' (*Zeitgeist*), although Hauser 'dexterously'⁶⁸ avoids mentioning them. Why? For Hauser, as for his detractors, these concepts are not 'real', since the only real agent of history is the individual; nonetheless, they are necessary in order to refer to the unutterable reality that weights on the individual, and thus they must be *constructed* by the historian: in this, they resemble Max Weber's concept of 'ideal type' (*Idealtypus*),⁶⁹ an affinity Hauser made explicit.⁷⁰ The concept of 'baroque' would be, as Weber's concept of 'feudal town', a heuristic aid. But there is a significant difference: while Weber denies the concept of 'feudal town' the capacity of weighting — as a real factor — on its inhabitants, Hauser maintains that 'style' and 'worldview', in spite of being fictional totalities, weighted on the individuals that carried them as if they were real — in fact, they still weight on us.⁷¹ The final goal of his method is the

⁶⁸ Wessely, 'The Reader's Progress', 40: 'Hauser's Mannerism, published in 1964, is a belated monument to the same tradition: it is less cramped and anxious [than Antal's book on mannerism], but moves (however dexterously) within the same old constrictive limits.'

⁶⁹ It is important to stress this point, for although many authors have considered Hauser a *Zeitgeist* adept in the most vulgar sense, he did in fact criticize 'assum[ing] that there is anything like the impersonal spirit of a social group or historic period, the mind of a nation or a 'folk soul', an autonomous *Zeitgeist*, or any such supra-individual entity', considering it 'the worst kind of metaphysics' (Arnold Hauser, 'Siegfried Giedion: Mechanization Takes Command' (review), *The Art Bulletin*, Vol. 34, No. 3 (Sep., 1952), 251-253, 1948, 252). For Hauser, supra-individual totalities are hermeneutical aids — not the driving force of history —, a way to better understand the constrictions imposed upon individual minds.

⁷⁰ Hauser, *The Philosophy of Art History*, 88.

⁷¹ The revolutionary stance within art history to shift towards 'visual culture' and dispense with the concept of style altogether, as represented in the works of Svetlana Alpers, can be seen as a heroic attempt to confront the mythology of western styles — terms like 'Renaissance', 'post-Renaissance', 'baroque', and the like. This is not the place to discuss this matter, but it should be emphasized that the dismissal of style by the proponents of visual art history fails to fully acknowledge — and properly value — the shifting meaning of styles

apprehension of the fictional⁷² ‘solution [given] to one and the same problem of how to live’. Form, ideology, and rationalization are, as their mediations, subordinate to archaeological reconstruction, and sociology is understood as the science of their coordinated interpretation:

With the understanding that man lives an essentially social existence, sociology has moved into the center of scientific thought; it has become a central science and has taken over within the cultural system the integrating function which previously belonged to philosophy and religion. Art has this new orientation to thank for the growing consciousness that it enjoys a unity with the rest of the cultural structures.⁷³

As reality is unutterable, its representation is always a form of fiction: ‘a totality of view which could only be achieved from an artistically imaginative point of view’.⁷⁴ The fact that Hauser’s ‘sociology of art’ is not ‘scientific’ is related to his conception of sociological thought as inherent to the ‘world-views’ of modernity. As an antipositivist, he denied science this integrative function, and thus conceived of ‘sociology’ as the conjunction of all the partial tools available to the critic. Benjamin’s ‘ur-history’, which in *The Arcades Project* took ‘as its starting-point the “latent mythology” of Parisian urban architecture’,⁷⁵ is, in the same sense, a concept

as source of historical knowledge, in defense of accurateness of ‘the critical appreciation of and interpretation of individual works’ (Alpers, ‘Style Is What You Make It’, in *The Concept of Style*, ed. Berel Lang, Cornell University Press. Ithaca and London, 1987 [1979], 134). In spite of Alpers’ high estimation of accurateness —itself interpretable as a variant of the positivistic fetishization of science—, she is fighting against ‘the nomination of period styles and subs-styles’ as an activity that suffers from scientific fetishism: its fundamental premise is that categorization is ‘more honorific (because it is scientific)’ (Alpers, ‘Style Is What You Make It’, 134). She is making a solid argument against meaningless, invented categorizations, struggling to find a meaningful whole in spite of her own defense of microscopic analysis; Alpers’ proposal is to engage works of art in a ‘modal way of thinking’ that resembles the kind of empathic interpretation proposed by Hauser, as it also attempts to re-construct the subject of experience: ‘In taking on a modal way of thinking, we realistically link the maker, the work, and the world and leave the fiction of the stylistic problematic to be just that—one of the many modes in which man makes meaning of his experience’ (Alpers, ‘Style Is What You Make It’, 162).

⁷² Ironically, we concur with Ernst H. Gombrich’s remark: ‘however, this is not social history, but historical fiction’, with which Csilla Markója opens her recent paper on Hauser’s overlooked —and newly re-discovered— first writings (Markója, ‘The young Arnold Hauser and the Sunday Circle: the publication of Hauser’s estate preserved in Hungary’, *Journal of Art Historiography*, Nº 21 Dec. 2019) — some excerpts of which were published in the magazine *Enigma*, Issue 91 (2017).

⁷³ Hauser, *The Sociology of Art*, 15.

⁷⁴ Hauser, *The Sociology of Art*, xvii.

⁷⁵ Rosen, ‘Benjamin, Adorno and the decline of the aura’, 4. Also, in David Frisby, *Fragments of Modernity: Theories of Modernity in the Work of Simmel, Kracauer and Benjamin*, Routledge, 2013 [1985], 208: ‘Even in these early notes to the Arcades Project, a dialectical image of the

for the kind of historical reconstruction that is achieved in an act of critical re-creation:

Benjamin's intention ... was to grasp such diverse material under the general category of *Urgeschichte*; signifying the "primal history" of the nineteenth century. This was something that could be realized only indirectly, through "cunning": it was not the great men and celebrated events of traditional historiography but rather the "refuse" and "detritus" of history, the half-concealed, variegated traces of the daily life of "the collective", that was to be the object of study, and with the aid of methods more akin, above all, in their dependence on chance: to the methods of the nineteenth-century collector of antiquities and curiosities, or indeed to the methods of the nineteenth-century ragpicker, than to those of the modern historian. Not conceptual analysis but something like dream interpretation was the model.⁷⁶

Indeed, looking back to the criticisms that weighed down on both authors, it seems that their very special kind of Marxism was not only added as software to a Kantian hardware, but also reprogrammed in the image of psychoanalysis: ideology was conceived by both in terms of psychoanalytical rationalization, and not otherwise. This means that the mechanism by which ideology 'goes through the heads' of individual minds —in other words, mediation— falls under the well-known psychoanalytic principle of free association. Establishing that mediations are fictional, unpredictable and, at times, even inextricable, is establishing that ideology and rationalization, being the same thing, but referred to different sources, should behave in the same manner. César Lorenzano suggests that, in Hauser's theory, the psychological layer is the mediation between the social and the aesthetic layers,⁷⁷ a statement which is congruent with the idea that their 'leaps in mediation' are closely related to the fact that their analysis resemble 'something like dream interpretation'. Hauser's efforts to prevent his method from falling into the 'mystifications' of Hegel's 'cunning of reason' and of Marx's and Engels' concept of reflection⁷⁸ found, in the argument that 'everything in history is the achievement of individuals', the

new and the primal or mythical is very much in evidence. So too is the juxtaposition of modernity with antiquity which is one of the central keys to Benjamin's analysis of modernity. The world of myth permeates the modern world of newness in such a way that, along with the surrealists, one can speak of the creation of modern myths of urban life.'

⁷⁶ Howard Eiland and Kevin McLaughlin, 'Translator's Foreword', in Walter Benjamin, *The Arcades Project*, trans. Howard Eiland and Kevin McLaughlin based on the German edition by Rolf Tiedemann (original German title: *Das Passagen-Werk*), The Belknap Press Of Harvard University Press. Cambridge and London, 2002 [1927-40], ix.

⁷⁷ César Lorenzano, 'Seminario: sociología del arte' (course program), Universidad de Buenos Aires, 2005, [URL: <http://jornadas.sociologia.sociales.uba.ar/programas/2005/sm7205.pdf>; accessed 10 oct. 2019], 1-2.

⁷⁸ Hauser, *The Sociology of Art*, 56, 67-78, 194-6.

'leading principle' of his works;⁷⁹ a premise which would also point to the conception of the individual mind as the ultimate mediation between society and art. Furthermore if taking into account 'his acute sense that only in a man's inner psychic life can continuity be registered'.⁸⁰ To Burgum's remark that Hauser's analysis in *Mannerism* is predominantly psychological, we should add those by William Johnston, who found the book to be an oneiric reconstruction:

The key to Hauser's sensibility lies in his affinity with mannerism. He sees its differentia as the juxtaposing of discordant elements to create a dream-world. ... To a casual reader, Hauser, with his antitheses and plaudits for all points-of view, may seem the quintessence of objectivity, but it is the objectivity of a mannerist fascinated by life's incongruities. Beneath his prose pulses a capacity to empathize with all artists and all thinkers, a negative capability of astounding proportions. Sympathy for all styles creates on his pages a kind of 'fictional space', a scholar's dream-world in which all styles and all thinkers co-exist and contribute to a greater whole, as in a Tintoretto or a Beccafumi.⁸¹

It is impossible to fully reconstruct history, dreams, or the appearance of an ancient city out of the partiality of its ruins. But in completing what is missing, Hauser and Benjamin hoped to get a glimpse not only of the reconstructed past, but also of a new definition of modernity. Their works try to articulate their own stance to modernity by answering the question: which of modernity's many faces take an interest in this precise episode of the past? As these authors were deeply aware that the illusion of identity rests upon mythological continuities which are not always fully acknowledged, their works on the sixteenth, seventeenth, and nineteenth centuries describe comparable procedures into the mythologies of modernity.

If Freud's psychoanalytical theories, which are illustrated resorting to the types of Greek mythology, can be considered a modern 'mythologization of psychology', then, in a similar manner, the locution 'mythologization of history' might be appropriate to describe akin procedures in the realm of history as these authors conceived of it: Benjamin's 'ur-history' as 'mythologization of history' relies on the assumption that modernity is not lacking a historical myth, just as Hauser's reconstruction of stylistic progression is mythologizing. According to Hauser, styles are not 'scientifically defined' attending to facts or formal characteristics, but are the subjects of shifts in meaning according to when and where they are found in history. In this regard, it is worth to recall that Hauser found Freud's psychoanalytical myths to be lacking historical dimension.⁸² In a time when 'modern' scholars aspire to dispense with the concept of style and its ambiguities, Hauser's use of it resembles Egyptian mythology: all style-names — romanticism,

⁷⁹ Hauser, *The Philosophy of Art History*, vi.

⁸⁰ Wallace and Zaslove, *Utopic Modernism* [unpublished].

⁸¹ William H. Johnston, 'Art and Alienation', *Modern Age*, Vol. 11, n°1. Chicago, 1966, 104-5.

⁸² Hauser, *The Social History of Art*, Volume IV, 141.

naturalism, etc. — could mean a completely different thing depending on where they are uttered, an aspect of his method that is surely related to his youthful admiration of Hungarian philosopher Bela Zalai, whose work revolved around system-theory. According to 'Zalai's view, ... the same elements possessed different functions in different systems',⁸³ an argument that Hauser tried to apply to the problem of aesthetic systematization in his 1918 doctoral dissertation.⁸⁴ In a later interview, he explained:

The system is none other than the connectedness of the elements. In different spheres, in different areas of knowledge or intellectual creation and thinking identical elements may assume different functions, and individual disciplines, sciences evolve from these systems⁸⁵

As Jerry Zaslove points out, to the misunderstandings inherent to this homeless branch of Marxism it must be added, in Hauser's case, the fact that he chose to call his method a 'sociology of art' in a time when it could have been less controversial under a different term.⁸⁶ By creating 'a scholar's dream-world', Hauser strives, as Benjamin, to understand the shifting myths operating in the present. But while Hauser eluded formulating a concept for the present, Benjamin did so with his 'now-time'. In Michael Löwy's words:

The central Benjaminian concepts, such as the 'now-time' — that authentic instant that interrupts the continuum of history — which seems to him to be manifestly inspired by a 'mixture' of Surrealist experiences and motifs from Jewish mysticism⁸⁷

To be able to interpret the 'now-time', one must first reconstruct the preceding 'ur-history', just as the interpretation of present and past dreams complement each other. They are, like Hauser's, dialectical concepts, since they integrate the incompatible in a juxtaposed, dream-like fashion. Incongruity in Hauser's depiction of styles is as incongruity in dreams; totality is always dialectical in that it can never avoid being paradoxical: a juxtaposition of heterodox elements, as experience itself. Thus, the concept of 'constellation' is, for both writers, radically important, for it banishes the vulgar conception of a dialectic limited to two poles. Two main meanings are distinguishable for the concept of 'constellation' in this philosophical-historical context: the first would be the total situation at a given time

⁸³ Congdon, 'Arnold Hauser and the Retreat from Marxism', 42.

⁸⁴ Markója, 'The young Arnold Hauser and the Sunday Circle', 8.

⁸⁵ Markója, 'The young Arnold Hauser and the Sunday Circle', 5.

⁸⁶ Zaslove mentions this in our personal correspondence, for which we are very grateful, and to which this article is very indebted. Other authors, like Daria Saccone, also consider that by calling his method a 'sociology of art' Hauser motivated many harsh criticisms from authors who wanted to establish sociology of art as a systematized discipline of scholarly status (Saccone, *Arnold Hauser*, xiv-xv).

⁸⁷ Löwy, *Fire Alarm*, 2.

— a transversal cut in the timeline of history. The second would be the relation of that total situation with the total situation given at another different time — a longitudinal cut in the timeline of history. ‘Now-time’ implicitly addresses both the transversal cut of history at the very present and the constellation it forms with the past, while ‘ur-history’ addresses the same idea for distinct moments of the past. Partial elucidations, that could be called sub-constellations, are explored by Benjamin in order to clarify the total present constellation, which would establish the grounds for the knowing — or crafting — of a feasible outlook for ‘meaningful experience’ in our ‘now-time’. Benjamin’s sentence ‘chaque époque rêve la suivante’, — which Adorno encouraged him to eliminate from the draft⁸⁸ — reveals the motivation of such an interest in the myths that shaped the nineteenth-century mindset: they also helped shape ours. But, as we are conditioned by the myths of the past, many assumptions and traits are forgotten, just as many memories are in the process of the individual mind that strives for identity. In both Benjamin and Hauser, placing Kant at the centre of their theories implies that their respective totalities refer, despite apparent disparity, to the subject of experience:

The nineteenth century was the collective dream which we, its heirs, were obliged to re-enter, as patiently and minutely as possible, in order to follow out its ramifications and, finally, awaken from it.⁸⁹

It is not that our worldview — our mythology — is, literally, some sort of ‘equivalent’ of a particular worldview in the past; it is rather that, given an intense empathy between two historically distinct worldviews, through the comparison between the two arise convergences — some of which would, for Benjamin, retain ‘redeeming power’ in the present, and thus be saved from the peril of oblivion that is inherent to culture — and also divergences — myths that could not have been identified as such in the past: the myth of genius, of progress vulgarly understood as subjugation of nature, or of the omnipotence of science, logic and reason. Hauser’s interest in the nineteenth-century interpretation of the Renaissance as the origin of ‘the struggle against the spirit of authority and hierarchy, the idea of the

⁸⁸ Benjamin, *The Correspondence*, 495.

⁸⁹ Eiland and McLaughlin, ‘Translator’s Foreword’, in Walter Benjamin, *The Arcades Project*, ix. Also in Frisby, *Fragments of Modernity*, 189: ‘However, this dissolution of the mythology of modernity in a historical context could not be carried out merely by a collector of crucial elements and refuse - however much the collector does point to one dimension of Benjamin’s method. The prehistory of modernity could only be undertaken by someone with a clear topographical knowledge of the layers of phenomenal reality that were to be excavated. The distinctive form of historical archaeology which Benjamin practiced presupposed a knowledge of the relevant topography of modernity before one could begin to excavate and remember (*‘Ausgraben und Erinnern’*) the past which had been lost. It might require reducing the world to rubble, a crucial task of ‘the destructive character’ (*‘Der destruktive Charakter’* 1931) where the world and its ‘wish symbols’ had not already crumbled. But, ‘he reduces what exists to ruins, not in order to create ruins, but in order to find the way that leads through them.’

freedom of thought and conscience, the emancipation of the individual, and the principle of democracy' —an image that still is, in popular culture, very much taken for granted— was actually *crafted* by Jules Michelet (1798-1874) and Jacob Burckhardt (1818-1897), casting into oblivion the many continuities between the Renaissance and the Middle Ages.⁹⁰ Each epoch discovers something new —for there *is* a progressive awakening of some of these traits throughout the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries—, but each author exaggerates those traits of the past that help them build their own identity, while distorting or ignoring others. Understanding why there is empathy between distinct historical times is necessary to better judge the distance between them; because, as Hauser states, 'any artistic tendency is in a way the result of what has gone before, and this creates at any time a unique situation in the historical process as a whole'.⁹¹

At the same time, the methodology of both Hauser and Benjamin have a similar schema —interpreting a feasible totality from particularities, then interpreting particularities through the totality. Having seen how Benjamin's 'ur-history' is constructed, it is now pertinent to outline, in a crude manner, a scheme for Hauser's process of inquiry. For each investigation, Hauser departs from a general hypothesis for totality, backed by several sub-hypothesis from diverse cultural spheres, which are also quite general; these are, in many cases, interpretations already available in the preceding historiography. In the process of harmonizing the available material into a cogent whole, some are refuted, some taken for granted; some refutations and validations are backed by facts, and some are not. Once a general outlook —a *Weltanschauung* or a *Zeitgeist* theory— is achieved, defining the relation between art and society, he then proceeds to apply it to singular phenomena —works of art, historical episodes and events, biographical facts—, qualifying his original premises. This interpretation of the case through the totality serves to illuminate possible relations, jumps between the spheres, which are indemonstrable and materially untraceable; very often, several possibilities are given, mentioned, or considered, without making an explicit case for any of them. According to Adorno, Hauser doesn't impose a scheme 'from above', but corrects and nuances the totality as his inquiry advances:

The stamp of validity on Hauser's procedure, however, is the fact that wherever a thesis remains hanging above the interpretive work as an abstract excess, he forces its correction by an immersion into the material.⁹²

It is arguable that Hauser, as a 'late harvester', wrote his two analytical works⁹³ under similar premises. Perhaps it has not been sufficiently examined if the

⁹⁰ Hauser, *Mannerism*, 32-4.

⁹¹ Hauser, *The Philosophy of Art History*, 82.

⁹² Adorno, 'Sociology of Art and Music', 107.

⁹³ Hauser wrote two historical investigations —*The Social History of Art* (1951) and *Mannerism* (1964)— and two works mainly dedicated to theoretical considerations — *The Philosophy of Art* (1958) and *The Sociology of Art* (1974).

differences between them arise in a greater degree from the scale of the enterprise, rather than from diverging theoretical framework: *The Social History of Art* focuses on the longitudinal constellation of Western history, while *Mannerism* does so on a transversal constellation that is especially relevant for the present. In a similar fashion, it may be fair to assert that while Benjamin deeply modified the theoretical articulation of his purpose throughout his life, its core remained the same. In spite of 'external' differences, Benjamin himself characterized the most colossal enterprise of his maturity years, the unfinished *Arcades Project*, as being in its procedure akin to his early work on the German baroque drama (*Trauerspiel*), his only finished book:

I periodically succumb to the temptations of visualizing analogies with the baroque book in the book's inner construction, although its external construction decidedly diverges from that of the former. And I want to give you this much of a hint: here as well the focus will be on the unfolding of a handed-down concept. Whereas in the former it was the concept of *Trauerspiel*, here it is likely to be the fetish character of commodities⁹⁴

It is no coincidence that both authors have been labelled, through their conception and use of dialectics, as Hegelian-Marxists: leaving aside differences in conceptual framework and terminology, their discursive procedures could be described —like Hegel's *Phenomenology of the Spirit*— as the 'unfolding of a handed-down concept'.⁹⁵ Despite his dislike for Hegel's style,⁹⁶ it is clear that Benjamin proceeds, like Hauser, from a generalization glimpsed out of accumulated facts from heterogeneous sources, and then back onto historical material, which is finally re-read through the original concept — while this concept is, at the same time, reinterpreted and explored through the material. The outline would be: (1) macroscopic through the microscopic, (2) microscopic through the macroscopic. Also, although both transformed the concept of ideology in the image of psychoanalytical rationalization, in striving to apply a similar logic to Marxism and psychoanalysis as they became integrated as layers of their Kantian-based multilayer theories, they also transformed certain aspects of psychoanalysis in the image of Marxism, trying to make it more dialectical — hence Benjamin's conceptualization of 'dream' in dialectical terms. As they conceived of their

⁹⁴ Benjamin, *The Correspondence*, 482.

⁹⁵ George Steiner elaborated on this in relation to Benjamin, relating this trait to the subjective poetics of his style (Steiner, 'Introduction' to Benjamin's *The Origin of the German Tragic Drama*, 12) — a point also present in authors discussing Hauser's prose (Saccone, *Arnold Hauser*, 305-7).

⁹⁶ In Benjamin's words: 'Hegel seems to be awful!' (Benjamin, *The Correspondence*, 109); 'The Hegel I have read, on the other hand, has so far totally repelled me. If I were to get into his work for just a short time, I think we would soon arrive at the spiritual physiognomy that peers out of it: that of an intellectual brute, a mystic of brute force, the worst sort there is: but a mystic, nonetheless.' (Benjamin, *The Correspondence*, 112-3)

procedures as dialectical,⁹⁷ and dialectics as Hegelian-Marxist, this also accounts for their self-proclamation as ‘Marxists’ (and not ‘psychoanalysts with Marxist interests’).

But they considered themselves Marxists yet in another relevant way: the present they strove to understand was that of the later phase of capitalism: twentieth-century mass culture. How could mass culture be ‘redeemed’ from the alienating outcomes of its servitude to capital? How can its subduing tendencies be reversed? It is clear that both Hauser and Benjamin condemned didactic simplifications. Thinking complex issues must be dealt with in an accordingly complex manner led them to writing styles that have been perceived as erudite and, at times, painstakingly difficult.⁹⁸ In spite of that, it could be argued that their works were envisaged, paradoxically, for a non-specialized audience. Hauser explicitly articulated that *Mannerism* was meant for the general reader interested in the issue, as well as for the scholar,⁹⁹ an attitude dating back to his first book.¹⁰⁰ On the other hand, it has been affirmed that Benjamin’s attempt to transcend academic discourse, much in the manner of Nietzsche’s *The Birth of Tragedy from the Spirit of Music*, prevented *The Origin of the German Tragic Drama* from succeeding as *Habilitationsschrift*.¹⁰¹ Furthermore, in a letter to Hugo von Hofmannsthal he states the following concerning the *Trauerspiel* publication:

For my part, the idea that it would be easier to find a publisher who puts out books of general interest than one who does purely scholarly books, in the narrow sense of the word, also played a role in choosing Rowohlt. For a ‘scholarly’ stance, in the contemporary sense, is certainly not the main thing in my study. From the perspective of a clearly scholarly publisher, therefore,

⁹⁷ Zuh states the following: ‘it is dialectical in two relevant senses. (a) It balances the polarity of a subjective–objective analysis. It describes how these elements of knowledge are able to cooperate with each other: through the third and mostly unseen factor making their cooperation feasible. It is also dialectical (b) as a third methodological program that mediates between scientific ‘explanation’ and ‘historical’ understanding in order to overcome ‘the unreflexive moment of our historical existence’ (Zuh, ‘Arnold Hauser and the multilayer theory of knowledge, 4). Both (a) and (b) point to the Marxist label.

⁹⁸ If there has been lack of consensus regarding Hauser’s legibility, dating back to the publication of *The Social History of Art*, in Benjamin’s case there seems to be no doubt about the challenges of his style (John Osborne, ‘Translator’s Note’, and Steiner, ‘Introduction’, in Benjamin’s *The Origin of the German Tragic Drama*, 5, 7; also, in Eiland’s ‘Translator’s Introduction’, in *The Origin of the German Trauerspiel*, 2019, par. 4, 14; Howard Eiland and Kevin Mclaughlin, ‘Translator’s Foreword’, in *The Arcades Project*, x, xiv)

⁹⁹ Hauser, *Mannerism*, xix-xv.

¹⁰⁰ In spite of this, *The Social History of Art*’s legibility was also criticized, as Thomas Mann’s letter to Alfred Knopf (American publisher of the book) makes clear: ‘The fact that you heard it said that this work is hopelessly difficult I am quite unable to understand.’ (Deodáth Zuh, ‘Hauser Arnold Levelezéséből’, in *Enigma*, Issue 91, 140, 2017, 143).

¹⁰¹ Steiner, ‘Introduction’ to Benjamin’s *The Origin of the German Tragic Drama*, 12-3.

that could diminish the value of the text, whereas it is precisely where its interest for me lies.¹⁰²

In any case, what is assertible is that both strongly rejected the idea of suiting their work to a narrow, however specialized, audience. Their methodological independence failed to satisfy the demands of academic practice in both cases, for we have seen how Benjamin's Kabbalistic — and psychoanalytical — tinge estranged him, methodologically, even from Adorno. It is perhaps permissible to sustain that both Benjamin and Hauser saw the combination of theory and practice in this sort of didactic aim. Taking it to the extreme, it could be inferred that their superseding specialization by means of didactic complexity could have been considered, by both authors, as their own contribution to the uplifting of mass culture in the long run.

In Hauser's case, this statement can be supported by the activities he pursued in Vienna after being cast away from the Sunday Circle due to his poor disposition towards the political activism of the group.¹⁰³ After working for some years as film distributor, Hauser founded his own company in 1929 — Hauser & Co. GmbH —, mainly engaged in distributing United Artists' films, and in 1936 he became one of the founding members of a film association — the *Gesellschaft der Filmfreunde Österreichs* — which was dedicated to the popularisation of film as a new artform. The association struggled to uplift the level of appreciation of the public by events which combined lectures, cinema, and theatre, and advocated movies that demanded a certain amount of effort on the part of the viewer, polemizing against official institutions like the *Institut für Filmkultur*. Through the association Hauser lectured, for example, on how the doubling of films entailed the risk of censure and deep losses in the knowledge it could transmit — a stance he implemented in his own activity as film distributor; another theme was the artistic, scientific, and educational possibilities of documentary films. Much of the considerations devoted on this lectures to the sociological foundations of films found their way to *The Social History of Art*.¹⁰⁴

¹⁰² Benjamin, *The Correspondence*, 281.

¹⁰³ The Sunday Circle (*Vasárnap Kör*) was an intellectual discussion group whose members gathered around Lukács between 1915 and 1918 in Béla Balázs house. Its sudden division between those committed and those uncommitted to the Communist Party started around 1918, but became fully apparent after the fall of the short-lived Hungarian Soviet Republic in 1919, which led many of its members to exile. When the Circle reconstituted in Vienna, in 1921, Hauser was not well received: 'they returned, as though to Canossa. Not to communism. ... This return of theirs is probably related to the fact that the world revolution is being deferred to an ever more remote future. As a result, the Circle's commitment to serious action cannot for the time being be a topic of discussion. Consequently, it is now less dangerous to be around us ... no one has any use for Hauser. He is ill and sickly, and one cannot know when, out of cowardice, he might again leave one in the lurch' (Congdon, 'Arnold Hauser and the retreat from Marxism', 43).

¹⁰⁴ Deodáth Zuh, 'Bevezető A Hauser Arnoldolvasókönyvhöz', *Enigma*, nº 91, 31-82, 2017, 46-52. A very different view of this 'cultural activism' is offered in Béni Ferenczy's description of Hauser's life in Vienna: 'Hauser is a scoundrel – he lives here like a profiteer doing nothing – accommodated at a boarding house in Unter den Linden for 400,000 marks a day,

As to Benjamin, his allegiance with Bertolt Brecht's notion of revolutionary theatre can be seen as directed against mainstream entertainment culture, which Hauser also adamantly opposed. Retrospectively, even the book on *Trauerspiel* can be interpreted as a symptom of his interest in the kind of culture consumed by ordinary people, for the book is an attempt to rescue from oblivion an underrated artform taken from seventeenth-century popular culture. Was he already looking for a distant relative of mass art?¹⁰⁵ Going one step further, *The Arcades Project* explicitly sets itself the task of rescuing redeeming moments from the mass culture of the nineteenth-century,¹⁰⁶ which he considered seminal for twentieth-century mass culture. This shift from popular art to mass art goes hand in hand with the shift from the 'esoteric' to the 'exoteric', which further accentuates Benjamin's aim to facilitate a notion of how could the masses redeem themselves in the twentieth century.¹⁰⁷

But what does 'redeem' mean? In the context of the praxis of history, it means gaining consciousness of the distortions inherent to the present situation, but also of those long forgotten moments of the past which could, in the present state of affairs, render themselves useful, and thus regain major significance. Jerry Zaslove uses the terms 'anarcho-modernism' and 'utopic modernism' to refer to the work of a diffuse branch of exiled non-orthodox Marxist authors,¹⁰⁸ emphasizing their interest in the 'utopic function' of art, and their aim of recovering a hopeful general outlook for the present through 'emancipatory illuminations of the future of art'.¹⁰⁹ The 'Marxist' historian assists the creation of a consciousness of the present, unifying theory and praxis. In Benjamin's words:

gold bracelet, patent leather shoes, Opera ... , and all that — not meeting anyone, or maybe bankers?' According to Csilla Markója, the fact that Hauser — who had assumed several roles in the Hungarian Soviet Republic's educational and artistic policies — was trying to 'hold his ground' through showbiz and the film industry — and not proletarian revolution — probably troubled artists who, like Ferenczy, were forced to emigrate after the fall of the republic (Markója, 'The Young Arnold Hauser and the Sunday Circle', 6).

¹⁰⁵ Eiland, 'Translator's Introduction', in Benjamin's *The Origin of the German Trauerspiel* (2019), par. 10: 'The works themselves, as performed by adolescent schoolboy actors from Protestant academies, were at once cannily theatrical and the product of a learned school culture (*Schuldrama*); intricately wrought on a rhetorical level, such as only the educated could appreciate, they were nonetheless staged with elaborate spectacle calculated to appeal to a wider audience.'

¹⁰⁶ Benjamin was one of the first to engage the study of mass culture seriously (Buck-Morss, 1989: ix).

¹⁰⁷ Habermas, 'Consciousness-Raising or Redemptive Criticism', 31.

¹⁰⁸ Jerry Zaslove, 'Herbert Read as touchstone for anarcho-modernism: aura, breeding grounds, polemic philosophy', in *Rereading Read: New Views on Herbert Read*, ed. Michael Paraskos, Freedom Press, 2008, 54-68. Also in the frustrated monograph on Hauser, edited in 1996 by Zaslove and David Wallace (*Utopic Modernism - Arnold Hauser between Exile and Utopia toward a Sociology of the Modern*).

¹⁰⁹ Zaslove, 'Herbert Read as touchstone for anarcho-modernism', 57, 64.

Marx said that social being determines consciousness, but at the same time that only in a classless society will consciousness become appropriate to that being. It follows that social being in the class state is inhuman in so far as the consciousness of the different classes cannot correspond to them appropriately, but only in a very mediated, inauthentic and displaced fashion. And since such false consciousness results, among the lower classes, from the interests of the upper, among the upper classes from the contradictions of their economic position, the production of a proper consciousness — and precisely first among the lower classes, who have everything to expect from it — is the primary task of Marxism.¹¹⁰

These remarks render explicit the last reason adduced to their self-proclamation as Marxists: both link modernity to capitalism, struggling to clarify their interrelated origins through art criticism, in order to produce a 'proper consciousness' — a proper myth? — that could enable us, as subjects of modern experience, to answer the question of how to live — that is, to engage the world in meaningful experience.¹¹¹ Thus the importance of mass art as the ultimate consequence of the dialectic of art and society under capitalism. It is worth remembering that 'art' is, for Benjamin and Hauser, a word that shifts in meaning depending on what epoch it is applied to: understanding its transformations in the twentieth-century — the age of its 'mechanical reproducibility' — is crucial to be aware of both its risks and possibilities. While Adorno did stress its risks, it would be unfair to call Hauser or Benjamin pessimists, for they did believe in its possibilities, and hoped to contribute to them without imposing a doctrine — as Lukács famously did when he tried to define what realism in art should be.¹¹² In Hauser's case, *The Social History of Art* culminates in the consideration of cinema as

¹¹⁰ Walter Benjamin, 'An outsider attracts attention - on The Salaried Masses by S. Kracauer', in *The Salaried Masses: Duty and Distraction in Weimar Germany*, by Siegfried Kracauer, trans. by Quintin Hoare, Verso, 1998, 110.

¹¹¹ G. W. Swanson sees the cultural diagnosis in Hauser as relating modernity to a 'crisis of reality'. In Swanson's words: 'While Hauser does not, of course, construct a full sociology in the sense that Marx and Weber do, his interpretation of culture as a crisis of reality, in which the experiences of modernity threaten the potentialities of its project, seems as pertinent today as ever. ... In the end, Hauser's sociological perspective, like any other, posits a world. This is a world in which, counter to the illusions of ultimate 'unities' achieved through the acquisition of heteronomous powers or ultimate 'freedoms' of garrisoned isolations, we engage the resources of freedom and creativity that are drawn upon by an experience that accommodates the effects of differentiation. Here, resisting the urge to exchange the present for a past or future 'other' world, we focus our efforts on discerning and engaging possibilities of change suggested by the defense of the dialectic of autonomy and democracy. Refusing either to fetishize or escape modern experience, we rather seek the emancipatory potentialities of the indeterminate social and historical present' (Swanson, 'Marx, Weber, and the Crisis of reality in Arnold Hauser's sociology of art', 2210).

¹¹² Roberts, 'Arnold Hauser, Adorno, Lukács and the Ideal Spectator', 165-6.

the idiosyncratic medium of mass art,¹¹³ while *Mannerism* concludes with the relation between mannerism and Surrealism, considering how the cinematic way of seeing coincides with Surrealist narrative.¹¹⁴ As for Benjamin, *The Origin of German Tragic Drama* establishes several parallels between German baroque and modern art, whose most radical movement was, at the time, Expressionism.¹¹⁵ Soon, however, Surrealism — which permeates *The Arcades Project* —, became for him, too, a key movement for the understanding of both modern and mass art. Although neither of them postulate how modern art should be understood, nor the precise role of mass art in the present, it is clear that both struggled to provide the antidogmatic foundations for that knowledge.¹¹⁶

Conclusion

In conclusion, the pretensions of both Benjamin and Hauser of unifying theory and praxis would point towards achieving the same goal: clarifying the mythologies of twentieth-century modernity by examining the constellation they form with the mythologies of early modern capitalism (in their case, the sixteenth, seventeenth, and nineteenth centuries). The purpose of Marxist-based microscopic historical inquiries is studying the chain of mediations to trace the interests of hegemonic classes, a diagnosis that contributes to awareness and, eventually — and hopefully — to political action. The purpose of Benjamin and Hauser's Kantian-based macroscopic inquiries is, in contrast, to provide the antidogmatic foundations for understanding the utopic potentialities of art: its power of redemption, which is moral and mythological. Here every mediation is an imaginative —but documented— sketch of the way a non-systematizable whole might work. The aim is not to find out which classes are oppressed by which, nor the chain of rationalizations that lead to mental pathology, but incorporates both perspectives as complementary procedures. Benjamin's 'ur-history' and the concept of style as worldview used by Hauser exemplify the archaeological reconstruction of historical mythologies: as every hermeneutic act, these constructions reveal something new from the past and, at the same time, betray the traits of their own age more easily

¹¹³ 'The film signifies the first attempt since the beginning of our modern individualistic civilization to produce art for a mass public.' (Hauser, *The Social History of Art*, Volume IV, 159)

¹¹⁴ Hauser, *Mannerism*, 378-81.

¹¹⁵ Steiner, 'Introduction' to Benjamin's *The Origin of German Tragic Drama*, 14, 54-5.

¹¹⁶ We agree with David Wallace's interpretation: 'For Hauser, cultural democracy does not mean choosing between popular culture and art, but preserving the tension between them. On the one hand, art becomes more deeply entwined with popular or mass culture. Not only do new art forms receive their impulse from popular culture, and here film becomes paradigmatic of such contemporary developments as performance art, but, by appropriating high art, popular culture 'opens many people's eyes to things and values of which they were never before aware ... [and] smooths the path to criticism and opposition.'" (Wallace, 'Art, Autonomy and Heteronomy', 40).

than historical works that are written in dry, rigorous, scholarly fashion.¹¹⁷ The revisiting of the past has for Benjamin, as for Hauser, the purpose of finding what was timely forgotten: its redeeming power lies dormant in long dismissed styles and cultural episodes.¹¹⁸ Thereby, they should not be considered as mere pioneers of a Marxist art history dominated by ideology critique, but — despite superficial differences — as exponents of a cogent, yet widely unacknowledged and neglected, branch of Marxism that failed to establish itself institutionally.¹¹⁹

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¹¹⁷ Regarding this, it is worth to recall that Hauser stressed the importance Marx and Engels placed on Balzac, whose works, according to them, contained a wider sociological knowledge than all books by French historians of the period (Hauser, *The Social History of Art*, Volume II 140, Volume IV, 16, 28, *The Philosophy of Art History*, 7-8, 28). Ideas which ought to have been important to Benjamin, who starts his 'Paris, Capital of the Nineteenth Century' citing Balzac, amply using his insights throughout *The Arcades Project* (Benjamin, *The Arcades Project*).

¹¹⁸ Further proof and clarification of this thesis should be achieved by comparing these authors' works on the origins of modernity: on mannerism, on the *Trauerspiel*, and on the Paris arcades.

¹¹⁹ This situation has already been addressed: regarding Hauser, authors like Jerry Zaslove, David Wallace, G. W. Swanson, John O'Brian, and, more recently, Axel Gelfert, Katharina Scherke, Csilla Markója and Deodáth Zuh point in that direction. Regarding Benjamin, the amount of parties claiming him is so vast that it would suffice to mention Michael Löwy's stance.