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The Theorization of Style

In recent years a number of intellectuals in various disciplines – the sociologist Kevin Robins (81-82), the architect and urban historian Nezar AlSayyad, the classicist Salvatore Settis, the (very different) literary critics Fredric Jameson and Hans Ulrich Gumbrecht – have remarked, in tones ranging from alarmed to unhappily resigned, the dissolution of historical consciousness in contemporary Western life. From different theoretical perspectives, adducing different sets of social, political, and cultural phenomena, they reach the common conclusion that since the Second World War a chronotope has emerged in which history is no longer understood as a sequence of causally connected events, and consequently time is no longer recognized as an agent of change. In this new chronotope, neither can the past be comprehended nor the future imagined as radically different from the present. Time is thus dehistoricized, and the contingencies of the present implicitly acquire the status of a norm – an unchanging and unchangeable condition so self-evident as to permit the outright denial of impending challenges to its continuance, such as climatic change and the exhaustion of natural resources. Historical events for their part do not altogether disappear from view, but rather are assimilated instrumentally into the present, "forced into an oppressive and virtual concomitance with" it (Settis 5f.). The past, in other words, becomes "a mere repository of *exempla*" (6) to be invoked in the self-affirming service of what Gumbrecht labels the "ever-broadening present" and identifies with the state of unfulfilled expectation represented in Beckett's *Waiting for Godot* (200, 25ff., 67f.).

If these diagnoses are correct, they confirm – ironically – the very sense of historical temporality that our current chronotope has abandoned in favor of indefinite simultaneities. Temporal succession and the historicity of human culture are, or were, fundamental principles of the historical understanding that, whatever its relation to our own, is widely agreed to have developed around the middle of the eighteenth century in concert with the temporalization of nature in the sciences, from astronomy (Kant's nebular hypothesis of stellar formation) to geology (De Luc's geohistorical cosmogony) to biology (Lamarck's evolutionary theory of complexity). The scientist's task is analogous to the historian's, Buffon proposed in the *Époques de la nature* (1779), because both the natural and human worlds change over time and the manifestations of either must therefore be identified and differentiated temporally:

Just as in civil history one consults deeds, studies coins, and deciphers ancient inscriptions in order to work out the epochs of human revolutions [*déterminer les époques des révolutions humaines*] [...] so in natural history one must search through the earth's archives [...] and assemble all evidence of traces of the physical changes that point to nature's different ages. (28)¹

Yet Buffon's recognition of the historicity of civil society as a whole did not extend to its rhetorical productions. In the discourse he presented in 1753 on the occasion of

¹ Translations throughout are mine unless specified otherwise in the bibliography.

his induction into the Académie Française, having been elected on account of the popular success of his *Histoire naturelle*, Buffon addressed the subject of rhetorical style not *sub specie temporis* but *sub specie aeternitatis*. His purpose was to prescribe universally valid principles of selecting a style appropriate to content and to the order of nature: grander language for more exalted subjects, simpler language for humbler ones. These rules were invariable because nature itself, Buffon affirmed, "works according to an eternal plan from which it never deviates" (501). Correct style being the result of reflection rather than feeling, it followed that the most enlightened ages were the most eloquent: "Ce n'est que dans les siècles éclairés que l'on a bien écrit & bien parlé" (500).

Ironically, however, Buffon's very application of his principles to the *Histoire naturelle*, describing swans in a high style and mice in a low style, eventually encouraged the dismissal of his scientific work as lacking substance – *stilo primus, doctrina ultimus*, in the Latin preferred by the Linneans (Lepenies 154) – and now he is known primarily for a maxim he did not actually write: "Le style c'est l'homme." As Harald Weinrich reminds us (137-38), this is a distortion of a phrase whose context is Buffon's dubious assertion, towards the end of his speech to the Academicians, that "only well-written books are destined for posterity" (503). Since the content of a work is detachable from it and can be communicated by other people and in other forms, the individuality – and hence the memorability – of a work consists in its eloquence. Knowledge, facts, and discoveries are things "external to the man," whereas "the style is the man himself": "Ces choses sont hors de l'homme, le style est l'homme même" (503). Buffon clearly means that works distinguish themselves by their styles, and authors by their choice of styles. For if style (which Buffon defines as giving "order and movement" to ideas) is successful to the extent that it corresponds to nature and the ideas to be conveyed, it cannot then be a direct expression of the author's subjectivity. Only in its decontextualized and shortened form, therefore, could Buffon's dictum be interpreted as a tenet of an expressivist aesthetic, or what Weinrich calls a Romantic "stylistics of the individual" (140), which had emerged in connection with the eighteenth-century cult of genius. In death, Buffon became a representative of aesthetic principles he had not espoused in life. And in that respect, it was not the style but the age that made the man.

What interests me about Buffon's *Dicours sur le style* is not the argument itself, but the contradiction between its rationalist universalism and the historicist particularism of his scientific theories. It would be a mistake to describe his resolutely unhistorical conception of style as anachronistic in relation to his temporalized geology and natural history. For contradictions of this kind are as characteristic of the age as the rise of historicism itself. Implying the co-existence of differing experiences or understandings of time, they might be considered examples of the phenomenon for which Reinhart Koselleck coined the phrase *Gleichzeitigkeit des Ungleichzeitigen*, the simultaneity of the nonsimultaneous. But having invoked this phrase, I must immediately qualify its meaning in the present context.

Koselleck himself used it as synonym for "temporal layers" (*Zeitschichten*), a concept that, as he explained in the introduction to his book of that title, "refers, like its geological model, to several levels of time [*Zeitebenen*] of various durations and

different origins, which are nonetheless present and effective at the same time" (9). This concept acknowledges and thematizes the possibility that, let us say, an eighteenth-century London merchant would have experienced time very differently from a contemporaneous Calabrian shepherd, whose way of life was essentially the same as that of generations of his ancestors. The relation to which I am referring, however, entails not merely co-existence but reaction. If time was an undifferentiated singularity for the stylist Buffon and a distinctly segmented series for the natural historian Buffon, the two characters were nonetheless united in the same person. It is therefore reasonable to ask whether he did not resist the full implications of his historicism in order to preserve the possibility of a systematic rhetorical theory.

The nature of the resistance that Buffon seems to me to exhibit – a resistance to the consciousness of historicity – is clarified best by its contrast with an earlier cultural transformation involving conflicting conceptions of history. Here another scientific work, not by Buffon but by a Genevan contemporary, may serve as illustration. In his *Lettres physiques et morales* (1779-80), Jean-André de Luc proposed a geological account of terrestrial chronology, which he divided into six long epochs, as a scientifically and theologically sound interpretation of the biblical accounts of the hexameral creation and the Noachian deluge. Superficially, de Luc's attempt to reconcile geological and scriptural time resembles late-antique Christian allegorizations of Homer, like Clement of Alexandria's interpretation of Odysseus tied to the mast (in the twelfth book of the *Odyssey*) as a symbol of Christ on the Cross (cf. Rahner 376-77). But whereas the Greek Fathers had been trying to displace a polytheistic culture whose myths remained too resonant to be ignored, de Luc was seeking to preserve revealed religion from the challenges to it by scientific theories whose historicizing orientation he accepted and shared. By declining, in contrast to Buffon, to speculate on the causes of geological events, de Luc created an opening within the practice of geohistory for a traditional conception of divine voluntarism – which is to say, for an extrahistorical cause of the intrahistorical.

Unlike the contrasting *Zeitschichten* of our imaginary London merchant and Calabrian shepherd, which would have had no connection beyond their co-existence, those in de Luc's letters were responding to each other. By means of ingenious allegoresis and a rejection of etiology, de Luc affirmed scriptural authority while expounding a naturalistic geohistory. In fact, neither religion nor geology could emerge unscathed from this mutual accommodation, so it is hardly surprising that the *Lettres physiques et morales* appear to have been ignored by the scientific community (Porter 202). As Weinrich observes of Buffon (141), it is risky to try to serve two masters at once. But de Luc's attempt to mitigate the effect on human self-understanding of the temporalization of earth's history had many contemporary parallels, particularly in the aesthetic realm, to which I shall turn in earnest after sketching briefly the larger theoretical context.

The history of historicism in the eighteenth century has been studied extensively. Its disciplinary manifestations include not only the philosophical tradition that extended from Chladenius and Herder through Humboldt and Ranke to Simmel and Weber, but also, at least in their modern forms, classical archaeology, art history, literary history, and historical linguistics. Friedrich Meinecke, Ernst Troeltsch,

Reinhart Koselleck, Peter Hanns Reill, Stephen Bann, Joseph Levine, Paul Hamilton, Peter Fritzsche, and Frederick Beiser, among others, have described how, in various European nations and in various discursive contexts, received practices of historical study, emphasizing the repeatability and moral exemplarity of events, were called into question as a new, temporalized understanding of history asserted itself. Underlying this intellectual revolution – which itself gave the word *revolution* its meaning of radical, as opposed to cyclical, historical change – was the modern concept of progress, which presupposed the singularity of events and the immanence of their causes. Historicism inferred from the premises of singularity and immanence first, that the human world is wholly constituted by specific historical processes, and second, that it can be explained by reference to those processes in accordance with the principle of sufficient reason.

But if history consists not in a repetition of the essentially similar but in a succession of unique events in distinct contexts, then it must entail irrevocable losses as well as undeniable gains. The normative Enlightenment narrative of humanity's self-emancipation from ignorance – a narrative encapsulated variously in works ranging from Bernard de Fontenelle's *De l'origine des fables* (the supplanting of mythic thought by rationality) to Kant's "Was ist Aufklärung?" (humanity's maturation into the adulthood of reason) – thus implied a counter-narrative recalling all that was discarded or sacrificed along the way. To the extent that it recognized such losses as privations, historicism provided the basis for one, though not the only, critique of the very concept of progress that made it possible.

The resulting tension between narrative and counter-narrative is observable, for example, in the first systematic literary history in English, Thomas Warton's *History of English Poetry* (1774-81), which, while assuming the advancement of human reason to be the causal principle in historical temporality, lamented the poetic possibilities that were no longer available as a result of reason's accomplishments, for which he used the word *revolution* in its new sense:

[T]he true lover of poetry will ask, what have we gained by this revolution? It may be answered, much good sense, good taste, and good criticism. But, in the mean time, we have lost a set of manners, and a system of machinery, more suitable to the purposes of poetry, than those which have been adopted in their place. (2: 463)

This elegiac note in Warton's chapter on sixteenth-century literature had been anticipated by Hugh Blair in his *Critical Dissertation on the Poems of Ossian* (1763): "As the world advances, the understanding gains ground upon the imagination; the understanding is more exercised; the imagination, less" (3). Such expressions are manifestations of the temporal variant of the primitivist strain that ran through eighteenth-century thought and provided a motivation for the various historical revivals – to which I shall return – in the century's literature and visual arts.

Regretting the obsolescence of romance motifs and mythological figures, Warton recognized the historicity of literary forms but could not relate their use or supersession to specific historical conditions except insofar as those conditions were interpretable as successive stages in reason's triumph over superstition. By contrast, in the more thoroughly (if still inconsistently) historicist *Auch eine Philosophie der*

Geschichte zur Bildung der Menschheit, published the same year as the first volume of Warton's *History* (1774), Johann Gottfried Herder faulted Enlightenment historiography for assuming the universal validity of standards and values peculiar to the present, and for neglecting empirical diversity in order to construct abstract models of human social behavior. Historicity implied individuality: "In a certain sense," Herder argued, "every form of human perfection is *national*, *temporally specific* [*Säkular*], and, considered most closely, *individual*. Nothing develops without being occasioned by *time*, *climate*, *necessity*, *world events* [*Welt*], and *fortune* [*Schicksal*]" (*Werke* 4: 35; Herder's emphasis). Just as he criticized Winckelmann's judgment of Egyptian art by Greek standards (*Werke* 4: 23), Herder objected to Richard Hurd's comparison, in the "Letters on Chivalry and Romance" (1762), of "northern knightly honour" with "the heroic ages of the Greeks" (cf. Hurd 224-46): "But in itself [the chivalric spirit] remains *unique* in the sequence of centuries – *like only itself!* [...] It seems to me that it is nothing more or less than an '*individual condition of the world!*' to be compared with no earlier one" (Herder, *Werke* 4: 50-51; Herder's emphasis). Although sympathetic to Hurd's rehabilitation of the Middle Ages from critical contempt, Herder saw no need to justify the study of chivalric romance by drawing analogies with more familiar Greek literature. Every age, every culture had its own integrity. It followed, then, that the only terms on which the Enlightenment itself could be understood fully and judged fairly were its own; and throughout *Auch eine Philosophie* Herder not only re-evaluated the past but scrutinized the present, observing caustically the disparity between its ideals of rationality, self-determination, and social benevolence and the realities of religious conflict, political absolutism, and the slave trade.

But if Herder's historicism served as the instrument of a forceful critique of Enlightenment, it was not without its own discontents, of which the most significant were the danger of moral relativism and the difficulty, which he acknowledged explicitly, of systematic comparison:

If human nature is not the vessel of an *absolute, independent, immutable* happiness [*Glückseligkeit*], as the philosopher defines it [...] and even the image of happiness changes according to the condition and climate [...] then fundamentally all *comparison* [*Vergleich*] becomes *problematic* [*mißlich*]. (*Werke* 4: 35; Herder's emphasis)

While the temporalization of history deprived the past of a claim to moral exemplarity, since that claim assumed history to consist in a finite number of repeatable basic patterns of events, the historicization of culture deprived the past, and in particular classical antiquity, of a claim to aesthetic normativity.

While agreeing with Svetlana Boym's observation that "[n]ostalgia, like progress, is dependent on the modern conception of unrepeatable and irreversible time" (13), I would add an important qualification. What nostalgia means in this context is not a longing for the absent past, but rather a longing for the absence of the past – that is, for a sense of history in which past and present are not so rigorously differentiated, so that the present may be comprehended and the future predicted by reference to the past, and the old understanding of tradition as transhistorical continuity may be retained. Thomas Warton regretted not that ancient poets had resorted to "fantastic beings" (1:

468), but that modern poets could no longer do so. Later, in the historical section of the *Farbenlehre* – a passage cited by Koselleck as evidence of his temporalization thesis (*Vergangene* 195) – Goethe noted the destabilizing effect on historiography of the absence of a permanent epistemological foundation:

There remains no doubt that world history must be rewritten from time to time. This necessity arises, however, not because many events have been rediscovered, but because new outlooks [*Ansichten*] develop, because the member of a progressive age [*der Genosse einer fortschreitenden Zeit*] is led to standpoints from which the past can be surveyed and appraised in a new way. (93)

For his part, Herder tried to resist relativism, albeit rather desperately, by asserting a providential guiding hand in human history, so that what appear to be contingencies – such as the Turkish conquest of Constantinople in 1453, which indirectly stimulated the Renaissance by forcing Greek scholars to flee to Italy (*Werke* 4: 57-58) – can be interpreted *ex post facto* as elements in a divinely ordained, temporally realized plan. Identifying thus a transcendent causation in the succession of historical events, Herder granted himself what he denied the *Aufklärer* who assumed an immanent teleology of rational progress: namely, the right to declare that human history has an overall continuity and meaning, even if the specific aims of its providential design remain mysterious. But while the appeal to providence may have allowed history as a whole to preserve a narrative linearity, a different expedient was needed to mitigate the incommensurability of historical phenomena themselves. Herder had, in other words, to answer methodologically the objection he anticipated, that "*no two moments are the same*, and hence Egyptians, Romans, and Greeks were also not the same at *all times*." "Can there be a *general picture*," he asked rhetorically, "without *subordination* and *concatenation* [*Untereinander- und Zusammenordnung*]?" (*Werke* 4: 35; Herder's emphasis).

In the event, Herder availed himself of an expedient that he had used before: periodization by analogy to organic life. In the second fragment of his first collection *Über die neuere deutsche Literatur* (1767), he deduced a general law of cultural change – "from bad to good, from good to excellent [*Vortrefflichen*], from excellent to worse, and to bad" (*Werke* 1: 181) – from his outline of the historical development of language in four stages, consisting of a monosyllabic childhood, a youth of song and poetry, an adulthood in which prose is added, and an old age ("the philosophical age") in which "correctness" supplants beauty (*Werke* 1: 181-84). Notwithstanding Christian Garve's criticism that this outline was inadequate to the complexity of empirical reality (cf. Beiser 137), in which (for instance) Greek poetry and prose developed according to separate principles and Latin knew no major poets before Cicero's time (*Werke* 4: 70f.), Herder returned to the analogy itself in *Auch eine Geschichte*, applying it more broadly to human intellectual development while conflating temporality with nationality. "Oriental" culture was designed humanity's infancy, Egypt its childhood, Greece its adolescence, and Rome its adulthood – a scheme that implicitly consigned Herder's own age to the end of a 1200-year senescence. But if Herder had here intended the analogy ironically, as his biographer Robert Clark believes (192), he need not, as Frederick Beiser counters (136), have tried to reconcile the contradiction

between the principles of development and individuality by insisting that "everything is a *means* and an *end* at the same time," complete in itself but nonetheless participating in a larger process (*Werke* 4: 54; Herder's emphasis). Each nation, according to its individual character, builds upon what precedes it and in turns lays the foundation for what will succeed it (*Werke* 4: 41).

Beiser is surely right that Herder clung to his ontogenetic analogy, despite recognizing it to be empirically problematic, because it allowed him to reject both a presentist teleology of history and a relativist denial of any cumulative historical movement. But it must be added that Herder's nationally bound periodization, reinforced by the thoroughly naturalized quadripartite periodization of human life, was itself crucial to retaining the possibility of ordering the temporal continuum of history and facilitating comparison within it. Periodization is so firmly entrenched in and even constitutive of our own practices of historical study that it is unlikely to strike us immediately as a means of resisting historicity. The contrasting senses of the English word *period* (retained from the Greek word *periodos*) – that is, as a cyclical process and as a fixed point in space or time, as something endless and as something complete in itself (cf. Brown par. 18) – are both relevant here. For whether it appeals to temporal recurrence (as in Herder) or creates a space within which historical phenomena may be compared synchronically (as in the disciplines of Romantic studies), periodization seeks to suspend temporality in order to make history comprehensible. If, as the little bird in "Burnt Norton" sings, "human kind / Cannot bear very much reality" (ll. 43-44), then historicism cannot bear too much history. This is not because – to quote further from Eliot – "Time present and time past / Are both perhaps present in time future, / And time future contained in time past" (ll. 1-3), but for exactly the opposite reason: the present and the future are no longer contained in the past. That time is past.

I have dwelt on Herder because he has been canonized by Meinecke and others as the founder of philosophical historicism. But he would have encountered a model for his principles of individuality and quasi-organic development in the major works of the figure who is commonly considered the founder of the discipline of art history, Johann Joachim Winckelmann. Appropriating from Buffon's *Histoire naturelle* both an emphasis on the climatic conditioning of human physical and intellectual development and an interpretive method of proceeding inductively from appearance to cause, and from Montesquieu's *Esprit des lois* (1748) the concept of the *génie d'une nation*, Winckelmann had constructed, summarily in the *Gedancken über die Nachahmung der Griechischen Wercke in der Mahlerey und der Bildhauer-Kunst* (1755) and far more comprehensively in the *Geschichte der Kunst des Alterthums* (1764), a speculative historical and national classification of ancient art according to form. His developmental scheme was applied both *intranationally* – in distinguishing the archaic, austere, refined, and derivative stages of Greek art – and *internationally* – in distinguishing "the origin, growth, mutation, and fall" (XVI) of ancient art as a whole (albeit while denying any direct connection between the first and second stages, represented by Egypt and Greece, because his ideologically overdetermined Hellenism demanded an autochthonous origin of its art). The broader application of the organic analogy depended on a reductively national periodization, for Winckelmann too

conceived culture not only as a product of particular climatic and historical conditions, but as an expression of national distinctiveness. Together, then, the concepts of cyclical development and national character served both Winckelmann and Herder as constraints on the principle of individuality, which taken to its logical conclusion would have made their respective historicizing projects unrealizable.

Nonetheless, Herder's long engagement with Winckelmann's writings was never uncritical. Already in the so-called *Älteres Kritisches Wäldchen* (1767-68) he had accused the *Geschichte der Kunst des Alterthums* of being insufficiently historical, particularly in assuming that art arose autonomously in all ancient cultures. For that assumption allowed Winckelmann to identify parallels in the formal characteristics and developmental patterns of the arts of different cultures without entertaining the possibility of interactions and influences among them. If, for example, both early Greek and Etruscan figures were angular and rigidly regular, that merely demonstrated for Winckelmann the general principle that, "as science precedes beauty in art" (*Da [...] die Wissenschaft in der Kunst vor der Schönheit vorrausgeht*), the arts must undergo a restrictive apprenticeship before becoming capable of representing beauty and grace (*Geschichte* 16; cf. Harloe 228). But it was his treatment of Egyptian art that exposed most fully the incompatibility, as Herder saw it, between Winckelmann's method of explaining artistic styles by reference to historical conditions and his stated intention, in the preface to the *Geschichte*, of offering a complete theory of "the essence of art" itself (XVI). In a draft for the revised edition of his *Fragmente über die neuere deutsche Literatur* (1768), Herder stated bluntly that Winckelmann's universalizing inferences from historical phenomena served primarily to reinforce his Hellenophilic prejudice, in that he was simply incapable of comprehending the Egyptians as anything but non-Greeks, and therefore unable to recognize possible Egyptian influences on Greek art (cf. *Sämmtliche Werke* 2: 119f.).²

Returning, four years later in *Auch eine Philosophie*, to his critique of Winckelmann's historiography, Herder confined himself to regretting the art historian's failure to assess Egyptian art according to "its own nature and manner" (*Werke* 4: 23; Herder's emphasis). To rectify the error of viewing Egyptian portrait statuary "with a purely Greek eye" (*mit bloß griechischem Auge*) requires identifying the purpose for which it was intended. Once that is done, it will become obvious why Egyptian statues were not paradigms of ideal beauty along Greek lines: "They were supposed to be *mummies*," Herder exclaims, "*memorials of deceased parents or ancestors* with all the exactness of their facial features and size" (*Werke* 4: 24). By addressing the question of the function of artworks in the social context of their origin, Herder implicitly dissociated genre from style and thus departed decisively from Winckelmann's terms of comparison.³ Genre, not style, would have to be the focus of a more thoroughly and

² I owe this reference to Harloe (231).

³ Genre should be understood here as the classification of an artwork according to its purpose and/or mode of representation, and style – following the definition of the architectural historian Paul Frankl – as "a unity of *form* governed by a few basic principles" (33). Thus, to illustrate the distinction from Frankl's own area of research, the

consistently historical study of ancient art, not least because, as Herder was later to observe in his *Denkmal Johann Winckelmanns* (1777), "the characteristics of the artworks of different nations [...] are not so distinct that the strictly *historical researcher* [*der strenge Geschichtsforscher*] could be satisfied with relying on them" (*Werke* 2: 656).

Yet when Herder produced his own treatise on sculpture, *Plastik* (1778), he was not so rigorously historicist as his criticism of Winckelmann might imply. To be sure, in the catechistically structured second section of the treatise, Herder explained the absence of nude figures in northern European and Asian sculpture contextually, as the result of intemperate climates and religious taboos against nudity, in contrast to the situation in ancient Greece, where nudity was accepted and the sculptors "threw off iron cloaks and stone coverings and formed [...] beautiful *bodies*" (*Werke* 4: 260f.). This explanation, as Robert Norton has pointed out (225-26), created for Herder the difficulty of accounting for the fact that the vast majority of surviving Greek statues represent clothed figures. His resolution of this difficulty rested not on historical evidence, however, but on an *a priori* argument about the fundamentally tactile nature of sculpture. With greater ingenuity than plausibility, Herder proposed that since sculpted clothing is more appealing to the touch than sculpted flesh, and yet the outline of the body was supposed to be discernible, Greek artists sculpted clothing as if it were wet and therefore clinging to the body (cf. *Werke* 4: 263f.). Similarly, his distinction between painting and sculpture involved contradictory explanatory principles, so that the two-dimensional art was assigned to history and the three-dimensional one to eternity: "The forms [*Formen*] of sculpture are as uniform and eternal as simple, pure human nature; the shapes [*Gestalten*] of painting, which are a chart [*Tafel*] of time, change with history, race [*Menschenart*], and times" (4: 276). Sculpture was the fatal Cleopatra for which Herder lost his historicism, and was content to lose it.

It was arguably in his proposal for a modern mythology, formulated in his essay "Vom neuern Gebrauch der Mythologie" (1767), that Herder became most Winckelmannian in spite of himself, explicitly affirming historical difference in one respect while implicitly denying it in another. Identifying in all mythologies the function of fostering social cohesion through a common stock of stories and images, Herder raised the possibility of a mythology rooted in vernacular culture and suitable for the present. Because mythologies can perform their social function only by virtue of their appropriateness to the particular nations in which they develop, a modern one would necessarily differ radically in content from its ancient predecessors. But how could it be formed if modernity consists, as Herder did not contest, in the very overcoming of mythic by rational thought? Like Warton, Herder considered his own age to be antipathetic to poetic creation, and he therefore recognized the difficulty of creating a self-consciously new mythology:

But since this inventive art presupposes two powers that are rarely present together, and often work against each other, namely the reductive faculty and the creative faculty, the philosopher's analyzing and the poet's synthesizing, there are many difficulties to our

term *cathedral* designates a genre, and *Perpendicular* a style. Cathedrals are not confined to the Perpendicular, nor is the Perpendicular confined to cathedrals.

creating an entirely new mythology. (*Werke* 1: 449).

If it were possible simply to revert to older ways of thought, there would be no need for a new mythology in the first place. But the same factors stimulate that need and frustrate its satisfaction. Herder's solution to this dilemma was to advise the moderns to imitate the ancients, creating the new mythology by appropriating the forms of the old: "Knowing how to discover one for ourselves, as it were, from the ancients' world of images is easier – that distinguishes the poet as something above a mere imitator. Let us apply the ancient images and stories [*Geschichte*] to more recent events" (*Werke* 1: 450). This conclusion bears more than a passing resemblance to Winckelmann's famous dictum, in the opening of the *Gedancken* (cf. 29), that the moderns can become inimitable themselves, which is to say authentically modern, only by imitating the inimitable Greeks.

If Herder's *Denkmal* questioned the very possibility of a history of ancient art based on a stylistic analysis of the limited material available, it also acknowledged that Winckelmann's appreciation of Greek art attested to his "unsatisfied but also inextinguishable *feel* [*Gefühl*] for the *freedom, friendship, simplicity, and sense* [*Sinn*] of the ancients" (*Werke* 2: 634). To understand ancient art in its historicity, through the comparative study of its forms, was the means by which Winckelmann sought precisely to overcome the historical divide between himself and the Greeks: "He thought of himself as an ancient who ought to write, live, and think like them" (*Werke* 2: 635). In Herder's presentation, Winckelmann appears as a researcher whose love of his subject blinded him both to evidence that might have contradicted his specific claims and to the absence of evidence sufficient to justify the general project of constructing what Winckelmann himself, in the preface to the *Geschichte* (XVI), called a *Lehrgebäude* – an untranslatable word that may be paraphrased here as "complete theory."

That edifice (to allude to the usual sense of the word *Gebäude*) was certainly constructed, as opposed to prefabricated. For although Winckelmann made use of details from Pliny the Elder's *Naturalis historia* in establishing his chronological scheme of the four stages of Greek art, with their corresponding stylistic manifestations, his dating of individual sculptures was dependent, in the absence of other evidence, on a conception of classical beauty derived for the most part from Renaissance painting, to which he had already been exposed in Dresden before relocating to Rome. In a remarkable aside in the preface to *Geschichte*, Winckelmann conceded his selectivity: "The works that I have passed over in silence either do not serve to define an artistic style or period, or they are no longer in Rome or have even been destroyed" (XXVIII). His procedure was, therefore, to infer historical conditions from the very thing that they were supposed to explain, stylistic characteristics. In an instance cited by Herder as exemplifying the subordination of historicization to systematicity in the *Geschichte*, Winckelmann argued that the so-called *Belvedere Antinous* could not have been intended to represent Hadrian's lover because the figure was too beautiful to have been sculpted as late as the second century A.D. Herder's objection to this line of reasoning took the form of an historical test: "If this Antinous is like the Antinouses on coins" – where the identification would be unambiguous – "then there can be no further doubt." But here as elsewhere, Herder concluded,

"Winckelmann loved Homer and the cycle of the heroic age somewhat too much" (*Werke* 2: 667).

In contrast to Herder, however, Winckelmann himself saw no contradiction between historicism and idealism, exactly because his purpose, stated explicitly in the preface to the *Geschichte* (XVI), was to reveal the essence of art itself, as the representation of beauty, in its successive stages of development. This project could succeed only if beauty were recognizable transhistorically, in circumstances hostile (as in, Winckelmann insinuated, absolutist Europe) as well as favorable to artistic creation. Thus it followed that artistic *production* and the resulting *product* were distinct. While arising from historically specific conditions, style was not reducible to them: historicity, in other words, could be abstracted as form. Style was at once the manifestation of and liberation from history.

In both aesthetic theory and artistic practice, stylistic appropriation became a means of transcending historical temporality while acknowledging its constitutive role in the self-understanding of modernity. As Hans Robert Jauss has noted (cf. 211), Friedrich Schlegel adapted from Winckelmann an evolutionary scheme in which Greek poetry, as the synecdochical illustration of the "eternal natural history of taste and art [*ewige Naturgeschichte des Geschmacks und der Kunst*]" (308), acquired historical exemplarity in place of an aesthetic normativity that could not be sustained, despite Winckelmann's efforts, under the pressure of historical scrutiny and the self-assertion of vernacular literary traditions. Like Winckelmann's *Geschichte*, Schlegel's *Über das Studium der Griechischen Poesie* (1797) sought to protect formal classification from the epistemological challenges of temporal discontinuity and incomplete evidence by circumscribing the total scope of stylistic change within a predictable generic pattern conceived by analogy to the organic life-cycle. Once this pattern was established with reference to Greek literature, it could then be extrapolated to modern and contemporary literature, notwithstanding the cultural disparity, which Schlegel too acknowledged, between modernity and classical antiquity. Indeed, his resistance even to the temporal logic of an evolutionary narrative of stylistic development betrays itself in his abrupt transition, immediately after the invocation of natural history I just quoted, from the Greeks to Goethe. As if to confirm his assertion that "the character of every individual Greek poet is at it were the aesthetic intuition of pure and simple elements [*eine reine und ästhetische Elementaranschauung*]," Schlegel in the next sentence describes Goethe's style as "a mixture of the styles of Homer, Euripides, and Aristophanes" (308).

Precisely how Goethe's example is supposed to illustrate the character of Greek poets is left unexplained, but the mixture attributed to him presupposes that artistic form can be at once historically referential – since the original sources remain identifiable in the new combination – and removed from historicity – since the original contexts of the appropriated styles (epics of the ninth century B.C., tragedies of the mid-fifth century, and comedies of the late fifth century) are effaced by their new combination. However baffling in its isolation at this point in *Über das Studium der Griechischen Literatur*, Schlegel's observation does intimate how artists of the nineteenth century, especially visual artists, in fact commonly engaged with an antiquity that they recognized to be fundamentally and irredeemably alien from their

own modernity: by dehistoricizing the historical, by aestheticizing the past as a panorama in which temporally successive forms are equally and simultaneously observable, and hence reproducible.

Nothing serves better as an illustration of this point, with which I shall conclude, than the Ludwigstrasse in Munich. For at the north end of this street stands Friedrich von Gärtner's Siegestor (1843-50), modelled on Rome's fourth-century Arch of Constantine, while at the south end stands his Feldherrnhalle (1841-44), a close copy of Florence's fourteenth-century Loggia de' Lanzi, and between them stands his Staatsbibliothek (1832-43), stylistically reminiscent of the Palazzo Pitti, though vaster in scale. Even closer in appearance to the Palazzo Pitti, or more precisely to a combination of that building's fenestration and the pilaster system of the fifteenth-century Palazzo Rucellai, is Leo von Klenze's Königsbau (1825-42), built for Ludwig I as part of the Residenz complex, not far from the Ludwigstrasse. Considered, as they should be, as elements of an urban ensemble, these buildings are significant less for the specific historical associations they evoke (whether with Constantinian Rome or Medicean Florence) than for the mere fact of their being historically referential. However bemusing to architectural historians (cf. Watkin and Mellinghoff 192), the stylistic heterogeneity of Ludwig's commissions is entirely characteristic of an historicist artistic consciousness. For the formal derivativeness through which the king sought to imply Bavaria's cultural pre-eminence in the present was predicated on the sense of a profound discontinuity with the past.

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