

Lycan's response to Kripke's arbitrariness objection is to say that we can simply stipulate which possible object Holmes is. But unlike with actual objects, it was mysterious to me how this was supposed to happen.

A number of the contributions to the volume recapitulate, to greater and lesser degrees, their author's existing position which can be found elsewhere. The most egregious example is Salmon's paper which largely consists of extracts copied and pasted from earlier papers. In Voltolini's case, I think this is actually a strength of the volume as his other writings on this topic are not always easily accessible. And given their contributions to the field, chapters from Braun, Howell, Salmon, and Thomasson are hardly out of place in this volume. I found something to disagree with in all of the papers in the volume, but more importantly I learned something from all of them, and in some cases a great deal. This volume is essential reading for those interested in fictional objects and empty terms.

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## Principles of Art History: The Problem of the Development of Style in Early Modern Art

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This is a review of a book on art history that was published 102 years ago: Heinrich Wölfflin's *Kunstgeschichtliche Grundbegriffe* was published in 1915 in Munich. So you may wonder: First, why review any book that was published 102 years ago? Second, why review an art history book (especially one that was published 102 years ago) in an aesthetics journal?

A simple answer to both of these questions would be that this book is just *that* important. It is so

important it merited a new edition in English at its centenary. And it is so important that aestheticians should be alerted to this fact. But is it really that important? It is easy to get carried away. The two introductions to this new edition make some breathtaking claims: This book is 'art history's crucible' (1), 'art history's Pandora's box' (1) and 'art history's collective consciousness' (47). Pretty strong words.

I want to address two questions in this book review: First, what justifies the new edition of this classic? Second, why should this book be interesting for aestheticians?

Wölfflin's *Kunstgeschichtliche Grundbegriffe* was translated into English by Mary Hottinger as *Principles of Art History* and was published in 1931 and republished many times since. It is one of the rare classic texts in art history that are freely and legally downloadable in their original form (and not just from those illegal Russian sites that deprive us of our royalties). But the translation of that first English edition is not very good. Many sentences are difficult to parse and some are just blatant mistranslations.<sup>1</sup> And the new translation is really very good—I did not spot any mistranslations and it is also easy to read.

In fact, there is only one puzzling part of the translation—the title. The German title is *Kunstgeschichtliche Grundbegriffe*, which means the fundamental concepts or maybe basic concepts of art history; fundamental concepts are not principles. Principles would be, presumably, generalizations connecting fundamental concepts. And one can pin down the fundamental concepts of art history without saying anything about principles or even while holding that there are no general principles of art history; which is, if we are charitable, exactly Wölfflin's position. So this new translation would have been a golden opportunity to correct this seriously misleading title—but the new edition failed to do so and went with the title of the 1931 translation of *Principles of Art History*. Of course the editors of the new volume are very much aware

<sup>1</sup> See Bence Nanay, 'Two-dimensional versus Three-dimensional Pictorial Organization', *Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 73 (2015), 149–157.

of this mistranslation; in fact, it became something of a commonplace and tedious pedantism in art history circles to mock the English title and use the almost always badly pronounced German title instead (by the way, I will do the same in what follows ...), but they thought that the book entered the Anglo-American art history tradition with this title and as a result it is preferable to keep it. I think this was a missed opportunity—many future generations of art historians and aestheticians who only know the title and not the work will continue to misunderstand what the book is all about.

It is also a missed opportunity to reproduce all the illustrations of the book in black and white. Wölfflin complains heavily, and sometimes somewhat pretentiously, throughout the text how substandard the illustrations of the volume are, partly because one would of course really need to see the original, but partly because the black and white reproductions obviously miss out on the colours. Illustrating a book with colour photographs was not an option in wartime Germany in 1915 (although the technology would have been just about available). But it is very much an option in 2015—especially given the glossy paper this edition is printed on. Again, following the tradition in this respect seems unwise.

One of the nicest features of the new edition is that it reproduces all the prefaces Wölfflin wrote for various German editions published during his lifetime. Some of these have never been published in English and they do a lot to clarify some commonly held misunderstandings about the argument of the book and they address some famous and widely echoed criticism by, among others, Erwin Panofsky, Arnold Hauser and Walter Benjamin. Another nice feature is that the volume is introduced by two very helpful essays that put Wölfflin's book in wider historical context.

Now for the much beefier question about why analytic aestheticians and readers of this journal should be interested in this new edition of Wölfflin's book (or even the old one). If we consider Wölfflin's reception in analytic aesthetics, the answer is not at all clear.

The *British Journal of Aesthetics* has always been kind to Wölfflin's legacy. In its second volume the journal published a book review of the new edition of *Renaissance und Barock*, an earlier, shorter and in some

ways clearer summary of the main ideas of Wölfflin's *Kunstgeschichtliche Grundbegriffe*, published originally in 1888.<sup>2</sup> The book review was written by no less than J. P. Hodin, one of the most important art historians working in Britain after the Second World War, a close friend of Kokoschka and an expert on Munch. Admittedly, the book review was one paragraph long and the English translation of the book, which was published just two years later was not reviewed at all,<sup>3</sup> but this is still some high profile presence in what was then a young journal, especially as it was a review of a new edition (see the pattern here?).

A mere 21 years later, Harold Osborne himself, president of the *British Society of Aesthetics* and the founding editor of the *British Journal of Aesthetics* reviewed the German edition of Wölfflin's notebooks and letters.<sup>4</sup> Finally, in 2002, the only journal article in analytic aesthetics on Wölfflin I know of was published in this journal: Jason Gaiger's excellent 'The Analysis of Pictorial Style'.<sup>5</sup> But that's it: there were no other articles on Wölfflin published in aesthetics journals (none at all in the *Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*). That is to say, until 2015, when the *Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* published a special symposium commemorating the centenary of *Kunstgeschichtliche Grundbegriffe*.<sup>6</sup> This was not merely to feed historical interest (at least that is what I would

<sup>2</sup> J. P. Hodin, 'Renaissance und Barock' (book review), *BJA* 2 (1962), 379–380.

<sup>3</sup> Heinrich Wölfflin, *Renaissance and Baroque* (London: Collins, 1888/1964).

<sup>4</sup> Harold Osborne, 'Autobiographie, Tagebücher und Briefe' (book review), *BJA* 23 (1983), 366–367.

<sup>5</sup> Jason Gaiger, 'The Analysis of Pictorial Style', *BJA* 42 (2002), 20–36.

<sup>6</sup> 'Symposium: The 100th Anniversary of Wölfflin's Principles of Art History' *Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 73 (2015), 149–188. The papers in this symposium were Bence Nanay, 'Two-dimensional versus Three-dimensional Pictorial Organization' (149–157); Whitney Davis, 'Succession and Recursion in Heinrich Wölfflin's *Kunstgeschichtliche Grundbegriffe*' (157–164); Jason Gaiger, 'Intuition and Representation: Wölfflin's Fundamental Concepts of Art History' (164–171); Michael Newall, 'Painterly and Planar: Wölfflinian Analysis Beyond Classical and Baroque' (171–178); and David Bordwell, 'Wölfflin and Film Style: Some Thoughts on a Poetics of Pictures' (178–188).

like to think—full disclosure: I was the editor of the symposium), but because it seems that Wölfflin has a lot to offer for contemporary analytic aesthetics.

Hodin's review contains only six sentences, but one of those is the following: 'Wölfflin's thesis is too well-known to be discussed here.'<sup>7</sup> I do wonder whether this was true of the readership of the *British Journal of Aesthetics* in 1962, but I am pretty sure it is not true now. Wölfflin wants to give us a conceptual toolkit to analyse visual art: this toolkit takes the form of five oppositions: Linear vs. Painterly, Plane vs. Recession, Closed vs. Open form, Multiplicity vs. Unity and Absolute vs. Relative clarity. Here is a brief characterization of these pairs of concepts (in the new translation):

(a) Linear vs. Painterly

*Linear*: 'the sense and beauty of things is primarily sought in the outline' (100).

*Painterly*: 'things appear as patches' (100).

(b) Planimetric vs. Recessive

*Planimetric*: 'disposes the parts of a formal whole in planar stratification' (96).

*Recessive*: 'emphasises the overlap of parts arranged one behind another' (96).

(c) Tectonic vs. A-tectonic (or, closed vs. open form)

*Tectonic*: 'the image is always pervaded by the opposition of vertical and horizontal' (206—I did change the new translation here a bit for clarity) and 'elements of the picture are organized around a central axis or, where this is not present, at least in such a way that the two halves of the picture are in perfect equilibrium' (205).

*A-tectonic*: 'strong aversion to the establishment of any central middle axis' (205).

(d) Multiplicity vs. Unity

*Multiplicity*: 'the individual parts still assert their independence, regardless of how tightly they are tied into the whole' (97).

*Unity*: 'eliminates the independence of the individual parts in favour of a more unified overall motif' (237).

(e) Absolute vs. Relative clarity (or, clearness vs. unclearness)

*Absolute clarity*: 'the complete revelation of form' (274).

*Relative clarity*: 'the appearance of the image no longer coincides with the maximum of representational clarity. It avoids it' (274).

These categories are supposed to describe 'the most general forms of representation' (95) but they are also supposed to explain the transition from 16th century art to 17th century art. There is a clear tension between these two claims and I take the charitable interpretation of Wölfflin's categories (and also the more interesting one from the point of view of aesthetics) to be the former: to consider these categories to be universally applicable.<sup>8</sup> Whether they can fully explain the differences between 16th and 17th century art is debatable; they probably cannot, according to the art historical consensus, partly because of Wölfflin's blind spot for mannerism. But the pairs of concepts enumerated above are clearly applicable to any visual art made anywhere at any time. Some of these applications will be more interesting than others (as some artists may have been more explicit in their awareness of them than others).

But these categories are not only applicable in any historical or geographical context; they are also applicable independently of what is depicted in the picture. The ten fundamental categories are, let us face it, formal categories and this may be the root cause of analytic aestheticians' reluctance to engage with

<sup>7</sup> J. P. Hodin, 'Renaissance und Barock', 380.

<sup>8</sup> This is also the interpretation of Wölfflin's categories in Lambert Wiesing, *Die Sichtbarkeit des Bildes* (Hamburg: Rowohlt, 1997) and in Gaiger, 'The Analysis of Pictorial Style'.

Wölfflin more closely. Much of the history of analytic aesthetics is the history of the fight against formalism—some of the canonical texts of our tradition are straight anti-formalist arguments. But only those who haven't actually read the book can dismiss Wölfflin as a formalist: Wölfflin's analyses of pictures always emphasize the interplay between form and content. In fact, the point could be made that some of the most important 'content' features of visual art can only be revealed if we take these Wölfflinian formal categories seriously.<sup>9</sup>

Some other often-voiced objections to Wölfflin's theory that resonate well with analytic aestheticians are the following. First, Wölfflin underplays the role of the artist (as his remarks about 'art history without names' clearly shows (72)). As one of the introductions reprinted in the present edition clearly shows, this accusation may have been based on a misunderstanding. Second, many of the heavy hitters of analytic aesthetics criticized Wölfflin's claim that 'seeing as such has its own history and uncovering these 'optical strata' has to be considered the most elementary task of art history' (93).<sup>10</sup> But this 'history of vision' claim has recently been shown to be consistent with recent findings about our perceptual system<sup>11</sup> and they also provide an extremely important premise of what has become known as visual culture studies and post-formalist art history.<sup>12</sup>

But while many aspects of Wölfflin's theoretical apparatus has been criticized within analytic

aesthetics, Wölfflin's book has been an influential text for even the least formalist of aestheticians; his important observation that 'not everything is possible at all times' (93) became a fundamental premise for both Danto and Gombrich (who otherwise have very little in common). Even avowed anti-formalists used his sensitive analyses of pictures extensively.<sup>13</sup>

I do not think Wölfflin's book is art history's crucible or Pandora's box, let alone its collective consciousness—as the introductions of this edition suggest. But it is a book that everyone who is interested in the visual arts should read. This new edition makes it easier to do so.

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## Philosophy of Song and Singing: An Introduction

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Philosophical studies of music in the analytic style have tended, with relatively few exceptions, to focus on a fairly narrow range of forms of instrumental music. This makes a certain amount of sense; the addition of words to music also adds a set of linguistic, cognitive, and aesthetic features that appear to be ancillary to the study of music as such, and may cloud rather than clarify discussions on the subject. Jeanette Bicknell's brief introductory text offers the beginning of a useful correction to this tendency, distilling the many issues and approaches to the matter and framing them in a way that serves both to introduce readers to central arguments in the philosophy of music and to advance the author's own claims on the subject of song and singing. Bicknell's ultimate aim here is to present a basic version of her account of song as

<sup>9</sup> See Bence Nanay, *Aesthetics as Philosophy of Perception* (Oxford: OUP, 2016), 91–116.

<sup>10</sup> See, for example, Arthur Danto, 'Seeing and Showing', *Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 59 (2001), 1–9; David Bordwell, *On the History of Film Style* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1997), 141–149; and Noel Carroll, 'Modernity and the Plasticity of Perception', *Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 59 (2001), 11–17.

<sup>11</sup> See Bence Nanay, 'The History of Vision', *Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*, 73:3 (2015) 259–271.

<sup>12</sup> See David Summers, *Real Spaces* (London: Phaidon, 2003); Whitney Davis, *A General Theory of Visual Culture* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2011); and Davis, 'Succession and Recursion in Heinrich Wölfflin's *Kunstgeschichtliche Grundbegriffe*'.

<sup>13</sup> See, for example, Richard Wollheim, *On Pictorial Organization* (Lawrence, KS: University of Kansas Press, 2002).