MYTH AND CHRONICLE: A RESPONSE TO THE VALUES OF ART[1]

JAŚ ELSNER

This volume turns on the key theme of art (Art?) as an autonomous aesthetic and institutional category.[2] Did this category exist in antiquity, and if so, when did it come into being? To what extent are approaches inflected by the *notion* of art (in any of its modern or ancient forms) appropriate for understanding the varieties of ancient visual artifacts, their making, viewing, usage, and ownership? To what extent and in what ways did ancient art have autonomous *value* in its own time, and are these at all commensurate with the ways it might have had value for later periods and for us?[3]

The idea that there might be one correct answer to any of this is a form of misguided historicism, even positivism, it seems to me. Indeed, the very range of responses given in this volume suggests that a multiplicity of different investments and varied axes to grind will not result in any final or monolithic solution. For these questions are not really historical or factual (despite the ways they may be framed in scholarly accounts, or the materials used to throw light on them). Rather, they are *philosophical* (or better *epistemological* or even *ideological*) in that they embody a series of

1 My thanks are due to Verity Platt and Michael Squire both for the invitation to write this response and their critiques of its first version. I am grateful also to John Ma, Robin Osborne, and Jim Porter for their comments on an earlier draft.

2 The problem was well posed for the modern era by Tanner 2006. Despite its title's focus on art history, Tanner's book includes rich accounts of social structure and artistic agency in classical and post-classical Greece (chapters 4 and 6), of the rise of art as an autonomous province of meaning (chapter 5), and of the ancient system of the arts (chapter 6).

3 A wonderful example of value situated in Greek art is the collector Georg Ortiz's discovery of "the truth and the absolute" therein: see Tanner 2006.10.

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dilemmas about any historically situated study of the past in conjunction with a topic of particularly privileged cultural significance (such as art).[4] We should not expect one right answer, but varieties—embedded in, or perhaps engendered by, different starting points or assumptions.

Two issues seem fundamental to me in this respect. First, all this turns on *Greek* art (notably, most of the matters discussed in the papers in this volume) and, especially, on the twin historical questions of when we might place the invention of art as an autonomous category, and in relation to what kind of art (usually, Greek naturalism), do we begin to use that heightened capital letter in the word "Art."[5] What is interesting in the focus on *Greek* art is that we inevitably confront the delicious and disarming difficulty of an insufficient evidential base from which to *prove* anything. We have no original surviving work described by the extant accounts of masterpieces in Pliny et al., no certainly surviving masterpiece by any of the great artists lionized in antiquity, not one of the cult statues or miracle-working images that our sources recount with a touch of awe. Second, despite the problem of not having enough evidence to mount a fully secure historical inquiry or argument, we are in the grip of an ancestral necessity to root the origins of our present concerns (not by any means only artistic and aesthetic concerns, though that is the interest in this volume) in that fundamental nexus of Western culture, namely ancient Greece. We know that "art" (whatever that means) was somehow born there (differently, perhaps more "Europeanly," from its Indian, Egyptian, or Mesopotamian origins), and for centuries—but especially after Winckelmann—we have been busy trying to be a bit more precise about what I have deliberately phrased in the woolliest terms with a touch of Eurocentric racism, which no amount of politically correct genuflections can ever wholly eradicate.[6]

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4 Tanner 2006.1–30 addresses some issues of modern high cultural investment in Greek art. Note that these issues are by no means exclusive to art—they are at least as pertinent to such modern questions as sexuality, economics, or governance.

5 On "the fact that the capital 'A' of fine art nearly always lurks within the small 'a' of art in our twentieth-century usage," see Shiner 2001.12–13—although his commitment (as he skips swiftly past antiquity and the middle ages, pp. 19–34) is to Paul Oskar Kristeller's eighteenth-century "category of fine art." Kristeller himself claims that "the term 'Art' written with capital A and in its modern sense, and the related term 'Fine Arts' (Beaux Arts) originated in all probability in the eighteenth century." See Kristeller 1990.164 (originally published in the *Journal of the History of Ideas* 12 [1951] and 13 [1952]). For an attack on Kristeller's assumptions, see Porter 2009a, with a response by Shiner 2009 and a reply by Porter 2009b.

6 For the central importance of Winckelmann, see, e.g., Pommier 2003, e.g., 175–98, 245–52; Tanner 2006.3–8; Marvin 2008.103–20. On the issue of racism, see Potts 1994.159–63.

It is, in short, the evidential problem that keeps the study of Greek art always just that step short of properly documentable history, and the ancestral necessity that keeps it firmly on the edge of ideology. For those reasons—whatever people may claim when they discuss Greek art—the stakes are always in part philosophical and theoretical, and never wholly empirical.[7]

"A TISSUE OF VAIN WORDS"

The inability to account satisfactorily for the birth of art in Greece was brilliantly articulated early in the last century by the Italian philosopher Benedetto Croce (1866–1952).[8] Croce's subject is not Art, nor Greek art, nor any of the concerns overtly driving this volume. Rather, he is writing about the contemporaneity of all history—even the history of the distant past—and the way that no history (his examples include "histories of the Peloponnesian or Mithridatic wars, of Mexican art or of Arabian philosophy") can be compelling unless it engages one's own "spiritual needs . . . the most personal and contemporary of histories," unless "it rouses, attracts or torments me like the image of my competitor, or of the woman I love, or the dear child for whose safety I tremble" (Croce 1966.498–99).[9] Yet for all the radical "presentism"—both personal and ideological, expressed with such emotive rhetoric in the first person singular—for which Croce's philosophy of history is famous, history cannot exist "in the absence of documents" since its "reality . . . lies in its verifiable character" (499). These reflections lead him to the history of Greek art (and, specifically, Greek painting), as an example of a problem for him, since it is a history "of which the documents have been lost." "The history of ancient Greek

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7 It may be added that this problem belongs to a long history of European investment going back via Heidegger and Nietzsche to Hegel, Lessing, and Winckelmann himself that has used the classical world and especially Greek art to mold modern traditions of aesthetics and values.

8 Croce 1921.15–19 (originally published in 1917), where the problem of history and chronicle and the example of Greek painting form the opening set of ideas. The argument is repeated in a 1937 essay from which I quote below: see Croce 1966. Croce's influence on art-historical thinking is above all marked in his close friendship with his exact contemporary, the dominant Viennese art historian of the first third of the twentieth century, Julius von Schlosser (1866–1938). See, e.g., de Mambro Santos 1998. Their letters from 1903–38 are collected in Lönne 2003.

9 On Croce's theory of the contemporaneity of history, see, e.g., Moss 1987.93–95 and Roberts 1987.151–52, 283–85.

painting is, generally speaking, for the most part a history without documents" (Croce 1966.500):[10]

> A History of Ancient Greek Painting, as given in the traditional accounts which have come down to us or have been built up on their basis by modern scholars, will be found to consist in a series of names (Apollodorus, Polygnotus, Zeuxis, Apelles, etc.) encrusted with biographical anecdotes, a series of subjects of painting (the Burning of Troy, Battle of the Amazons, Battle of Marathon, Helen, Achilles, Calumny, etc.) sometimes described in considerable detail, and a series of expressions of more or less accentuated praise or blame, all these names, anecdotes, subjects and judgments being ranged roughly in chronological order. But the names of the painters, where there is no direct knowledge of the works, are empty names, the anecdotes too are empty, and empty are the descriptions of subjects, the approving or disapproving judgments, and empty too the chronological order . . . If those verbal formulae say anything at all, this is because of the notions of ancient painting which we derive from fragments, secondary works, copies of analogous works of art in other media, or in poetry. Apart from the little that we know in that way, the history of ancient Greek painting is just a tissue of vain words. (500–01)

This empty kind of history—consisting of "words void of determinate content" (501)—Croce termed "chronicle."

We might be depressed by the "presentism" of our dilemmas in relation to the "art" question and by the impasse between our need to root "art" and our lack of sound evidence by which to document the rooting. But personally I think the problem interesting precisely because of that impasse

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10 Croce's example of the problem of writing a history of Greek painting and his characterization of this as "chronicle" has become something of a commonplace in the philosophy of history. See Collingwood 1946.202–03, Walsh 1951.32–33, Danto 1953, esp. 174–76, and Danto 1965.120–25. It is striking that most historians of Greek art are unaware of the classic philosophical account of their discipline as one where critical history is impossible and must be replaced by chronicle.

and compelling, in part, because the answers we attempt to hammer out of the fragments are going to be multiple, conflicting, valid in varied and different ways, and symptomatic of the different "presentist" projects and agendas of different scholars in any given era and across eras—precisely as the diversity of this volume confirms. It is less a question of observers' and actors' viewpoints in relation to the past, or what anthropology used to call "etic" and "emic" accounts, than one of mythologization (and competitive mythologizations) of the past by the present. The way such mythic versions are presented is through different and competing chronicles.

The vast majority of our ancient testimonia about works of art and about artists—certainly all the stories in Pliny, many of the accounts in Pausanias and Plutarch, in Philostratus, in the oratorical tradition, and so forth—are mythological in that they use art and artists in flexible and changeable ways to bring meaning to a given site, a specific parallel in historical biography or rhetorical practice, a human and narrative spin on a list of minerals or kinds of stone. The artists' stories—just like other myths—change in their retellings to suit the contexts in which they arise and the points they are being appropriated to illustrate.[11] I submit that the modern practice—which, despite the protests of those who want to claim "scientific" status for classical archaeology, remains in my view pretty close to how Croce described it—is not much different from the ways these stories are found in our ancient precedents. One might say, therefore, that if "chronicle" is that orchestration of narratives that tell a particular history, the resulting story is "myth."

What is particularly interesting in the question posed by Jeremy Tanner's book and by this volume's series of responses to it—by contrast to the ancient narratives on art and artists—is the move of that mythical structure from stories of individuals to an autonomous concept ("art") implying a special aesthetic category or an institution of excellence that supplies some kind of value beyond that of the materials employed in the making of works of art. This mythology is embedded in the history of taking art as an ideal epiphenomenon of and model for human culture and achievement, a history that certainly stretches back into antiquity itself. But as the frequent references in this volume to Paul Oskar Kristeller's 1950s argument that the system of the arts and, indeed, the notion of fine art (or just "Art") did

11 The classic discussion of artists' stories remains Kris and Kurz 1979 (originally published in Vienna in 1934).

not exist before the eighteenth century[12] surely demonstrate, it is also and specifically a twentieth-century problematic.

SOME GERMAN ANCESTRIES

By way of grounding some of the impetus behind the variety of positions intimated by the papers collected here, let me sketch something of the intellectual backdrop for a collective and autonomous concept of art. There is little doubt that the writing of art history—especially in the German tradition that was so dominant until the Nazi era —was fundamentally inflected by an instinct to generalize from particular examples to the notion of art.[13] In Goethe's words:

> When we would treat of an excellent work of art, we are almost obliged, as it were, to speak of art in general, for the whole of art is contained in it, and everyone may, as far as his abilities allow, by means of such a monument, develop whatever relates to art in general.[14]

That observation owes much to the vast influence of both Immanuel Kant's aesthetics and Johann Joachim Winckelmann's art history, projects that saw first publication in that perfectly Kristellerian moment of the 1760s.[15]

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12 Kristeller 1990.163–227.

13 Much is wrapped up here. The German written tradition—unlike other *national* traditions—does not imply a single cultural hegemony but rather at least two: Prussian and Austrian, with numbers of German-language traditions (such as Swiss, Bavarian, Czech, Hungarian) cautiously or actively self-differentiating from any hegemonic claims implicit in the monolithic term "German." In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the writing of art history (and other forms of cultural engagement) by Jews was deeply assimilated into these German-language traditions and then purged in the 1930s—turned out into that exile that so fundamentally formed the modern practice of art history (and most other humanistic disciplines), especially in the Anglophone world. It is worth noting that many of the creative tensions in the papers in this Anglophone book come from the confrontation of the approaches of different national traditions with and within what may be called the Anglo-American—I think of Neer on the French contribution of Vernant (in a German-inflected Anglophone context), Porter on Kristeller's (American) turn to Batteux, Osborne, implicitly, on Beazley's use of Morelli (an Italian pretending to be a Russian writing in German).

14 From J. W. von Goethe, "Observations on the Laocoon" (from *Propyläen* I.i, 1798), translated in Gage 1980.78.

15 See Kant's *Observations on the Feeling of the Beautiful and the Sublime* (1981, originally 1763) and the later *Critique of the Power of Judgment* (2000, originally 1790); Winckelmann 2006 (originally 1764).

Throughout the nineteenth century, and within the variety of lines taken by the likes of Hegel, Rumohr, Schnaase, Semper, and Göller, the struggle between empirical instantiations and essentialist generalizations about the spirit or nature of Art characterizes the creativity of the great tradition that, in turn, gave rise to what has been described as the "critical art history" of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.[16]

The two towering figures of late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century art history, whose teaching and influence dominated the discipline beyond the Second World War and continue to resonate, Alois Riegl (1858–1905) and Heinrich Wölfflin (1864–1945), were utterly committed—in subtle ways—to art as a collective and generalized phenomenon. Both espoused the detailed empirical study of style and, especially, the evolution or development of style as an autonomous and even teleological process through history,[17] as well as the discovery of general principles of interpretation (Podro 1982.99). Both saw a substantive subjective as well as objective side to the problems of the study of art.[18] It may be remarked in passing that the autonomy of art as a guiding assumption in these founding texts of art history is not wholly separable from the attempt to create a self-standing discipline of *Kunstgeschichte*, both scientific and in its own right autonomous.[19] As befits their universalist agenda for art history, both were universal in their interests, and both turned their hands to works of all periods. But it is relevant in the context of this volume's focus on Greece that when they looked at antiquity, both Riegl and Wölfflin wrote in much greater detail on the problems of Roman rather than Greek art.[20]

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16 See Podro 1982, esp. 17–58, for an admirable synoptic discussion of the nineteenth century.

17 See Podro 1982.107–10 on teleology and 133–43 on historical transformation in Wölfflin; Gubser 2006.130–31 on development and 179–86 on the autonomy of art in Riegl.

18 On Wölfflin and empathy, see Podro 1982.100–04 and Schwartz 2005.4–7; on Riegl and questions of perception, attention, and subjectivity, see Olin 1992.129–69 and Iversen 1993.124–47. For some key nineteenth-century background to all this, see Mallgrave and Ikonomou 1994. For the twentieth-century development of the empathy thematics, see, esp., Worringer 1953 (originally published in German in 1908).

19 As suggested by Schwartz 2005.5, 138–89.

20 Riegl's most famous book was *Spätrömische Kunstindustrie*, Vienna 1901, translated (badly) as Riegl 1985; Wölfflin's Roman article—untranslated so far as I know—is Wölfflin 1893 = Wölfflin 1946.51–71. Why both Riegl and Wölfflin looked to Rome rather than Greece is an interesting question. I suspect that both—as first-rate empiricists—were more aware than some of their successors of the problems of the lack of primary evidence combined with an excess of mythologizing investment in Greek art, by contrast with the

In the 1920s—the historical moment of the aftermath of empire, economic depression, and the consequences of military defeat in both the German and Austrian traditions that Wölfflin and Riegl respectively represented (although Wölfflin was Swiss by birth and spent much of his career there)—the discipline of art history stood at an impasse.[21] A radical variety of interpretative options were available, especially reflected in the widely divergent versions of Riegl's crucial and controversial idea of *Kunstwollen*:[22] was it a rational concept that solved in stylistic terms certain fundamental and a priori problems of artistic representation at any given period of history,[23] or was it an agent within history exercising real and expressive force as the implicit will of a collective psychic energy?[24] It is hardly surprising that versions of this second model—indebted to Gestalt psychology—should end up Nazi friendly,[25] especially in the work of the greatest art historian of the Second Vienna School, Hans Sedlmayr.[26] The interpretation of art in terms of collectivist ideals—both positive (Aryan, German, Nordic) and negative (degenerate, Semitic)—rapidly turned racist and cannot wholly be decontaminated from the bad odor of "Art's" most awful twentieth-century moment of ideological appropriation. The important point, however, is that the postwar positions of art historians on the questions central to us here—Art as an ideal and a generalization, issues of value and autonomy—cannot be separated from their Nazi heritage and, notably, the formidable investment of Greek art (our main subject in most of this volume's papers) with

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sheer mass of indisputably Roman material. But it is also true that neither Wölfflin nor Riegl was Prussian and neither shared the pan-Germanic (and later Aryan) love affair with Greece; indeed, Riegl's Austrian (which is to say late Hapsburg) investment was in Rome as a primary origin for the current Holy Roman Empire in which he lived.

21 See, e.g., Schwartz 2005.145–51 and (for a rather Viennese-centered perspective) Wood 2000.30–36.

22 There is a vast literature on this untranslatable and perhaps finally incomprehensible concept. See, e.g., Olin 1992.71–72, 129–53, Reichenberger 2003, Gubser 2006.153–61, Elsner 2006a.

23 This was the solution of Erwin Panofsky, 1892–1968. See Panofsky 1981 (originally 1920) and Panofsky 2008 (originally 1925). For discussion, see, e.g., Alpers 1979, Iversen 1993.148–66, Neher 2004, Schwartz 2005.148–49.

24 This is the solution of Hans Sedlmayr (1896–1984), which became dominant in the Second Vienna School. See Sedlmayr 1929 (trans. as Sedlmayr 2001), Kaschnitz-Weinberg 1929, Sedlmayr 1931 (trans. as Sedlmayr 2000), Pächt 1963 and 1999.268–300, Schwartz 2005.150–77, Bohde 2008.

25 For a history of Gestalt psychology, see Ash 1995, esp. 325–81 on the Nazi era.

26 Sedlmayr was an active Nazi and was appointed to the Chair in Vienna in 1936. See Aurenhammer 2004.25–49 and Binstock 2004.

the extreme burdens of positive idealization by a reprehensible ideology.[27] In particular, émigré Jewish art historians, deracinated from their deep cultural and intellectual roots in a Germany that after 1933 had effectively become utterly unrecognizable and displaced to worlds like England and America where, in certain ways, they were no less insecure and unfamiliar, cannot be expected to respond objectively to these topics.

Ernst Gombrich (1909–2001) writes famously in the first sentences of his vastly successful popular introduction to art history, *The Story of Art*, first published in 1950, "There really is no such thing as Art. There are only artists."[28] Published only five years after the war, still one year before Sedlmayr (dismissed from his Chair in Vienna for his Nazism in 1945) was rehabilitated to the Chair at Munich in 1951, this is an ideological statement—a mythical claim—in relation to immediate history. It repudiates the reification of Art (of course a phenomenon in itself much older than the Nazi regime and with a rather better pedigree), and, by doing so, attempts to purge Art from the dirt with which it must be sullied through any Nazi association. Here is how Gombrich continues in that first paragraph: "Art with a capital A has no existence. For Art with a capital A has come to be something of a bogey and a fetish . . ." These words have bite and edge when we see them as written in the late 1940s. The Gombrichian view rejects the collective idealization of Art in favor of applauding the work of individual artists—individualist heroes characterized in the same opening of the book's introduction by the repeated epithet "great."[29] By the time Gombrich wrote his masterpiece, *Art and Illusion* (delivered as the Mellon Lectures in 1956 and published in 1960),[30] he was quite explicit about

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27 On the German romance with Greece (stretching back to Winckelmann), see Butler 1935 and Marchand 1996, esp. 341–54 on the Nazi period (arguably too brief a discussion of a deep and complex if crude identification). A classic text (originally composed in 1935–36, but only published in 1950) is Heidegger 1971.15–88, with its long account of an ideal Greek temple at 41–44. For Hitler's own comments on Greek art, see Hitler 1939, e.g., 221: "If the creative spirit of the Periclean age be manifested in the Parthenon, then the Bolshevist era is manifested through its cubist grimace"; for the alignment of Greece and Germany, see ibid. 223: "In ancient times the theme that found its expression in the Acropolis and the Pantheon was now clothed in the form of the Gothic Cathedral" (cf. p. 245).

28 Gombrich 1972.4.

29 "The great Flemish painter Rubens . . . the great German painter Albrecht Dürer . . .": Gombrich 1972.5.

30 Note the explicit claims for *The Story of Art* as the origin for the thinking in *Art and Illusion*: Gombrich 1960.vii and 330.

his opposition to the collectivist tendency governing Nazi art history, and specifically the Sedlmayrian reception of Riegl:

> I have discussed elsewhere why this reliance of art history on mythological explanations seems dangerous to me. By inculcating the habit of talking in terms of collectives, of "mankind," "races," or "ages," it weakens resistance to totalitarian habits of mind. I do not make these accusations lightly. Indeed I can quote chapter and verse by enumerating the lessons which Hans Sedlmayr wanted the reader to draw from reading Riegl's essays.[31]

Yet in *Art and Illusion*, while creating the heroic model (deeply indebted to Karl Popper's *Logic of Scientific Discovery*)[32] of the individual artist as a scientist wrestling with "the unique visual experience which can never have been prefigured and can never recur"—"a constant search," a "sacred discontent, which constitutes the leaven of the Western mind since the Renaissance and pervades our art no less than our science,"[33] Gombrich effectively constructs a vision of endlessly experimental individuals working within an institution of experimentalism on the modern scientific model. Art as such may not exist, but the experimental process of invention and discovery, making and matching, moving beyond stereotypes through the creative investments of great individuals is imbued with all the institutional force, autonomy, and values that characterize "Art with a capital A." For all his passion—indeed, perhaps, because of it—Gombrich's explanations are no less mythical, and his mythmaking is no less potent, than Sedlmayr's.

When P. O. Kristeller (1905–99) deprives the Greeks of originating the concept of Art and relays it to the enlightened eighteenth century in 1951, his move is fundamentally a denial of that Aryan alignment to Greece, long and deep in the German tradition, which was an essential foundation

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31 Gombrich 1960.16–17. The Sedlmayr essay he attacks—"Die Quintessenz der Lehren Riegls" (1929) is cited above at n. 24.

32 Gombrich 1960.ix: "Any acquaintance I may have with problems of scientific method and philosophy I owe to his constant friendship. I should be proud if Professor Popper's influence were to be felt everywhere in this book." On Gombrich and Popper, see, e.g., Schneider 2009 on matters of method, and Hemmingway 2009 on their shared political project.

33 Gombrich 1960.148–49.

of Nazi classicism. Moreover, in placing the bulk of the impetus for inventing the "Fine Arts" in *France* (around the figure of the Abbé Batteux),[34] Kristeller is conducting a purgation of aesthetics by shifting its origins away from Germany as well as from Greece. This process of purification is exactly parallel to that conducted on the concept of the "Gothic" by a series of major German and Austrian art historians in the aftermath of the Second World War.[35] The Gothicists removed the essence and origins of the Gothic from Germany (where it had long been seen in the German-speaking art-historical tradition—alongside Greek classicism—as the archetypal Nordic/Aryan style) to France and the church of St. Denis.[36] The ideological—or better, mythologizing—impetus in Kristeller's paper is so powerful that (as James Porter has brilliantly and brutally shown) almost no attention is paid to what Batteux actually wrote in the effort to make him—and France—an originating hero.[37] It is a striking testament to the persuasiveness of ideologically charged but reasonably couched and overwhelmingly learned rhetorical arguments that no one attempted to check Kristeller's footnotes against the positions they were meant to support until Porter's paper of 2009; certainly it appears that Kristeller did not expect any of his American readers to do so. But my point here—in relation both to the essays in this volume and to the polemic between Porter and Larry Shiner on Kristeller's essay—is that it is misguided to be looking for factual truths in any of this when it is much more deeply about replacing the myth of German humanism with an equally mythical but, crucially, larger and redemptive European vision that can save the arts by making them not German and not Greek. Kristeller's

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34 Kristeller 1990.189–204, esp. 199–200, where Batteux takes "the decisive step towards a system of the fine arts." See Porter 2009a.8–14 for discussion.

35 The texts are Panofsky and Abbot Suger 1946, Panofsky 1951, Sedlmayr 1950, von Simson 1956, Frankl 1960 and 1962. For discussion, see Elsner forthcoming.

36 For "Gothic Man" as "German Man," see, esp., Worringer 1927.38, 41 (originally 1911), with Frankl 1960.669–80 and Schlink 1997–98, esp. 278. Note that the origins of Gothic were heavily contested between France and Germany between the Franco-Prussian War and the Second World War, with nationalist positions taken on both sides. See, e.g., Mâle 1917.109 and 167 (against the Germans) for a First World War take, with discussion by Frankl 1960.685–86; de Lasteyrie 1926.1; Focillon 1947.7, 139–43 for the focus on Paris (a just pre-World War II take—this text was first published in 1938); Lambert 1943.14–15, a strongly French nationalist line under German occupation. My point is that after World War II, the French line was fully espoused by the very German-speaking scholars one would expect to have supported its opposite beforehand.

37 Porter 2009a.12–13: "One has to wonder how closely Kristeller has read his Batteux?" Needless to say, Shiner 2009.162, n. 11 does not agree.

"system of the arts" is no less a mythical claim than Gombrich's "there is no such thing as Art": it is a direct ideological response to recent history—both personal, in fleeing Germany for Italy in 1934 and Italy for America in 1939, and collective.

Now my account here has been of what might be termed the "ideology" or high mythical theoretics governing the thinking of both these writers in key works written in the aftermath of World War II. But the mythmaking goes side by side with a more specifically historical set of choices in telling the story—what Croce called the writing of chronicle. Gombrich's chronicle of Greco-Roman art (in both *The Story of Art* and in *Art and Illusion*)[38] is a heroic progression that rises to the climax of Pheidias and Athens in the fifth century before gently tapering away into the Hellenistic and Roman eras. That, of course, is a familiar tale, but it is not the story Pliny tells (which peaks at Lysippus and Apelles at the court of Alexander);[39] that is, as a mythologizing chronicle it fits—or is constructed to articulate—the anti-totalitarian agenda of placing "the great awakening," "the road on which there was no turning back," "the Greek revolution," "the cataclysmic effect of the 'Greek miracle'" (or any of the other hyperbolic ejaculations with which Gombrich hails Western culture's supreme explosion of artistic *jouissance*) directly into the context of Athenian democracy. Pliny's Roman story, culled from Hellenistic sources, tells the same basic narrative ("the passage from winter to spring")[40] as climaxing in a triumphalist, all-conquering imperium.[41]

Of course, Gombrich is not at all original in his reshaping of the Hellenistic narrative adopted by Pliny—arguably the Pheidian (as opposed to the Lysippan) climax to the development of sculpture is already at play in the kinds of Second Sophistic "chronicles" of art implicit in Dio Chrysostom's *Olympic Oration* (*Or.* 12), in which the Zeus of Pheidias is compared with the Zeus of Homer, or Plutarch's *Pericles*, where Pheidias has a bit part as an attendant genius (at 2 and, esp., 31). One might say that these texts already depend on the kind of chronicle constructed of "empty names" and "empty anecdotes" so acutely characterized by Croce. How-

38 Gombrich 1972.46–79, Gombrich 1960.99–125. Not to speak of Gombrich's specific account of ancient painting in Gombrich 1976.3–18.

39 Isager 1991.138 sees that Pliny's supreme masters of mimetic art are Lysippus and Apelles, but not that this is the result of an Alexander-centered politics in his sources.

40 This acute characterization is from Bryson 1984.7.

41 On Pliny's imperial project, see Naas 2002.416–38, Carey 2003, Murphy 2004.

ever, there is no doubt that Gombrich's most direct forerunner is Winckelmann, with his insistence on political freedom as the animating principle of Greek naturalism.[42] Kristeller's chronicle, after playing about with a series of ancient writers on art (pp. 166–74), dispenses with antiquity altogether in its race for the Enlightenment.

MODERN MYTHS AND CHRONICLES

Figures like Gombrich and Kristeller are our immediate fathers (although, as I have tried to show, their mythologizations themselves have long ancestries).[43] Their works (and those inflected by them) have dominated our education in the fields of which they were the acknowledged masters. The return to categories like Art itself or the system of arts as an autonomous province of meaning within antiquity (to use one of Tanner's formulations) is an inevitable and necessary Oedipal response to a series of great scholars who did much to suffocate their successors through the inculcation of mythical ideologies shrouded in unapproachable reams of spectacular learning. What I have tried to show is that we can hardly blame the likes of Gombrich and Kristeller for the irrationality and ideological thrust governing their myths. Indeed, while "irrationality" might seem a harsh word to use, I would submit that it is precisely the reflex reaction to the irrationality of Nazi appropriations of culture that is the governing impetus.[44] In their place, as émigrés from and survivors of the worst catastrophe ever to fall upon Western humanism, one would hope to have attempted to do much the same and with the same strident passion. But that does not make any of it right or true. On the other hand, it does modulate the nature, stridency, and investment of our own mythologizing. For as I have tried to suggest,

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42 On freedom and art in Winckelmann, see, e.g., Potts 1994.47–48, 54–60.

43 For instance, Gombrich's *Art and Illusion* has been significant (perhaps even central) to the concerns of several of those writing in this collection. Not least, Neer 2002, esp. 30–32; Tanner 2006.36–38, 106; Elsner 2006b, esp. 68–70, 71–73; in this volume, it arguably informs both the opening conceit of Robin Osborne's paper and Neer's use of Wittgenstein's "duck/rabbit." Kristeller is, of course, fundamental to Porter 2009a and his paper here, as well as to Squire's introduction, but it has also helped formulate other thinking about ancient aesthetics—not only in Osborne's and Tanner's papers in this volume but implicitly in the closing section of Tanner 2006.301–02 on the "ancient system of the arts."

44 On Gombrich's penchant for ranting against the Viennese Rieglian tradition, especially as embodied by Sedlmayr, see Elsner 2006a.762–64 and Bakoš 2009.

mythologizing is necessary, but might also be seen by its mythmakers as a process that makes a plea for issues of *value* rather than determining the particular factuality of the questions it purports to confront, like whether art was modern and precisely when it was invented. Above all, of course, our problems and concerns today are far—very far—from the impulse to redeem humanism from its Nazi cataclysm that lay (overtly or not) at the forefront of the émigré project of the great humanist scholars of the mid twentieth century.[45]

One question, then, in turning to the range of approaches offered in this volume is to ask what kinds of myths we are now telling ourselves and in the guise of what kinds of chronicles. It seems invidious for a respondent to go assiduously through the papers offering inadequate summaries of complex arguments that the reader has already perused. So I shall restrict myself to commenting on the range of positions that speak—I think—to a creative pluralism of potential mythmaking open to our own era. While postwar art-historical scholarship, for all its great learning, was notably uninclined to methodological innovation or reflection (by sharp contrast with the era between 1890 and the early 1930s), many of the papers here show an interest in method influenced by the writings of the New Art History of the 1980s.[46] This matters for my argument, since methodological reflection is a potent (but often understated) means for ideological self-positioning.

The turn to sociology and anthropology, so powerfully embodied in the work of Jeremy Tanner,[47] deliberately resisting the dominance of aestheticist modes of response to art (such as fundamentally characterize Kristeller's approach), has had the ironic effect of putting aesthetic questions of value and autonomy center stage once more. Of course, these questions are inflected in terms of institutions with a certain agency and always seen in Tanner's chronicle through what one might call a comparativist triple-take—Greek art in the light of its Hellenistic and Roman receptions, classical art in the light of its post-Renaissance European receptions (the many references to collections, museums, and early publications such as D'Hancarville's catalogue of Hamilton's collections), and ultimately—

45 For some interesting thoughts in this direction, see Porter 2008 and 2010b.

46 There were a number of manifestos such as Zerner 1982, Bryson 1983, Rees and Borzello 1986. An influential account is Preziosi 1989.

47 I think not only of the conclusions of his paper here, with its invocations of Talcott Parsons and Max Weber, or of Tanner 2006, but also of his reader on the sociology of art, Tanner 2003, and his use of the anthropology of Alfred Gell—see Osborne and Tanner 2007.

although not in the paper in this volume—ancient art in comparison with other kinds of art, such as Chinese (see, e.g., Tanner 2007).

From a quite different starting point in philosophical aesthetics, Jim Porter (directly confronting Kristeller's overt and apparently historical argument)[48] has likewise signaled the return of aesthetics as a major element in our thinking about ancient literary and visual culture. Insofar as Porter's paper here points forward in his own work, the ancient aesthetics agenda (especially following the decipherment of the Philodemus corpus in the Herculaneum papyri and its rich evidence of hitherto lost Hellenistic aesthetic traditions) offers a large and expanding trajectory over at least the next decade.[49]

Tom Habinek, in tying aesthetic questions via Stoic physics to ultra-modern theories of cognitive- and neuro-science, offers a radical program of reading antiquity against and in the light of certain central concerns of modernity. Actually, Habinek's biological interests in perception as related to sensation are ones that lie deep in Gombrich's work—especially in *Art and Illusion*, though couched there in the conceptual vocabulary and interpretations of the 1950s—which seem now millennia away in terms of the rapidity of development in these scientific fields.[50] Interestingly, like Tanner's to some extent reception-related (and comparative) take on the period of the "Greek revolution," both Habinek and Porter turn away from the classical philosophical agenda of Plato and Aristotle that dominates Kristeller's account of the Greeks and look to the rich range of later developments in different Hellenistic traditions. That is, the shift in the myths told and their much greater modernism (or relevance to modern concerns) is, in part, related to a shift in what items to adduce in the retailing of the chronicle. Yet it may be that the move to less classical and canonical building blocks out of which to construct the chronicle allows for a reappraisal of, even a

48 An argument that becomes both historical and historicist in Shiner's elaboration of it—but without the ideological thrust underlying Kristeller's émigré moment in the 1950s. See, e.g., Shiner 2001.307: "I have tried to show that (fine) art, as we have generally understood it, is neither eternal nor ancient but a historical construction of the eighteenth century." One of the problems of the historicism currently dominant in the humanities is that it so often attempts to elide, disguise, or deny the ideological thrust running it.

49 Starting with Porter 2010a.

50 Habinek's reference in n. 6 of his paper to the work of John Onians (it was more overtly enthusiastic in an earlier draft!) takes him via one of Gombrich's most distinguished students (and a distinguished art historian of classical antiquity) back to the master. See, e.g., Onians 2003.

return to, the myth of Beauty (itself for so long anchored in the classical) that, it has been argued, was occluded in the arts of twentieth-century modernism (along with a general rejection of the classical) and may be poised for being reclaimed as "Art" or as the "aesthetic."[51]

If the problems of aesthetics can never be wholly divorced from questions of value, the papers of Verity Platt and Kenneth Lapatin take us directly to how value was constructed and underpinned in relation to privileged objects in antiquity. Platt rightly reminds us that the sacred precinct was the key arena within which so much ancient art was displayed, and sacred functions (from cult image to votive) were the prime mode for the operation of images in relation to their viewers. It is the worst art-historical disservice of so many modern handbooks of Greek and Roman art that the sacred is stripped from the aesthetic. That move also deprives us of seeing the grounding of the value of ancient art in its religious functions.[52] Lapatin traces the fascinating question of objects looted in antiquity (for their aesthetic, financial, or sacred value—or for all three) and subsequently restored. This is a brilliant strategy—not only in playing contemporary concerns about repatriation against ancient ideas—but in showing clashes of value: pieces taken away for one kind of reason but restored for another; the immanence of the sacred, or the special, in the object; the ways certain items come to stand for and even embody the identity of a given place or its people. Both authors choose to write a kind of chronicle that marks as key the dissonance between certain ancient works and their later places of replication or collection. Platt restores the religious continuity that may mark the link between settings or contexts, while Lapatin observes the very different dynamics governing an object's movement away from "home" and its return. In their different ways, both undermine a too easy assumption of increasing secularization in the rise of the "aesthetic," and, intriguingly, both resist the urge to tell a chronological story of the kind typical in accounts of the "rise of naturalism."

Beside such stories, committed in different ways to the philosophical question of the values of art, there exists a much more dirt-archaeological

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51 See Steiner 2001 on modernism's retreat from Beauty.

52 As Michael Squire points out to me, the occluding of religion across the whole of art history in the last few decades is not unrelated to the strongly secularist emphasis of the post-structuralist ascendancy. Of the three references to God in the index of Nelson and Shiff 2003, one is to "image as replacement of" and another to "as phallocentric master signifier."

materialist line among classical archaeologists: whatever we think of ancient art, it was (and is) first and foremost material culture. An element of response to this orientation runs through the approaches of both Robin Osborne and Richard Neer. The former applies the archaeologist's (very rarely the art historian's) quantitative method alongside the qualitative, while the latter alludes in his opening to the great question of style—essential, on the one hand, to the long history of art history (especially to Wölfflin and Riegl) and, on the other, to the archaeologist's instinctive reflex in classifying the data.[53] Osborne's signatures on pots take us directly to the question of the individual—the work of art as a personal communication, the issue of individual creativity, the problem of generalizing a concept like Art from the productions of disparate individuals. His article replays not only certain guiding interests in the work of J. D. Beazley (whose potters and decorators, even the Worst Painter, were always individuals, however much they may have been invented out of lines drawn on clay by a very peculiar method named after an Italian doctor),[54] but also in Gombrich's "there are only artists." Neer's critique of the discipline of ancient Greek art history by turning to the forms of semiotics espoused by Jean-Pierre Vernant takes the aesthetic story to a stage before "value," to the point at which the very concept of "image" became culturally viable in Greece. Yet his invocation of Wittgenstein's duck/rabbit and of Hamlet and Polonius on clouds is itself a genuflection to Gombrich's concerns with perception and our own (presentist) baggage of concepts in looking at the ancient past.[55] Both Osborne and Neer take us back through reflection on method to some of the grander and perennial concerns of the discipline, while at the same time focusing the thrust of their chronicle on the classical moment of Greek art in the fifth century B.C. and its inception, rather than its variety of interpretations and receptions.

THE ART OF ART HISTORY RECONSIDERED

The range and variety of approaches in this collection are rich, but so too are the junctures and parallel concerns of its papers. By no means

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53 See also, especially, Neer 2005.

54 I mean the Morellian Method. See, e.g., Wind 1985.30–46 (originally 1963), Wollheim 1973.177–201, Ginzburg 1983. On Beazley's Morellianism, see Elsner 1990 and Neer 1997.

55 For duck/rabbit, see Gombrich 1960.4–5; for clouds, see ibid. 154–69.

are all the kinds of methods available to modern art history represented (notably there is little—except in Michael Squire's introduction—on "visual culture"),[56] nor are all the ways of reconfiguring the names and anecdotes (or adducing unexpected ones) to make a new chronicle. Indeed, if I were to press my own story, it might be that something shifts in notions of aesthetics and value when the mark of the artist's hand comes to be legally enshrined as specially distinctive within the corpus of Roman law as part of the *ius imaginum*.[57] How typically late and Roman a story, coming from me!

But the concluding point I want to make is how *ancient* all this is—in two ways. First, there is in antiquity a deep interest in artists and the activity of making art, especially in ancient myth (from Homer's account of Hephaestus making the shield of Achilles through countless uses of the myth of the artist and the work of art for all kinds of topics, such as the relations of lover and beloved).[58] This itself seems to me to be good enough evidence for at least intimations towards an autonomous category of art with connotations of value (in all its senses) reaching deep into archaic antiquity, even if it was not formally named or precisely defined. Second, we ought to take notice of how ancient are all our modern approaches—both in the variety of chronicles adduced and in the range of ideological targets (the mythical ideals) we use them to uphold. The diversity, competition, sometimes incompatibility of mythical accounts—targeted to key issues that are ancestral to all our ideals of, and investments in, high culture (both our contemporary investments and those of the scholarly fathers with whom it is our privilege, perhaps our sacred duty, to disagree)—are like so many myths collected and reported by such writers as Pausanias.[59] The multiplicity and variability are directly related to these narratives' importance, the weight of passion invested in them directly related to the work they do in valorizing and justifying deeply cherished aspects of ourselves. The ideologies of our myths of art may be perpetually presentist—addressing current needs and desires—but that is also their great strength and interest.

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56 Classical archaeology and art history have not really taken on this model—although, to my surprise, I find myself given as an example in a very amusing piece by Kinney 2008. On the method (if that is what it is), see, e.g., Bryson, Holly, and Moxey 1994, Walker and Chaplin 1997, Mirzoeff 1999, Sturken and Cartwright 2001, Dikovitskaya 2005.

57 See Elsner 1998.241–43, for a brief discussion and survey of key texts.

58 The Shield of Achilles: *Iliad* 18.478–608. On the work of art in relation to the image of the lover, see Bettini 1999 for a rich discussion.

59 For a terrific account of this process in antiquity, see Veyne 1988.

In other words, this volume's papers situate themselves firmly in the present, imbibing current intellectual fashions and stemming from confrontations with contemporary trends. From the repatriation of antiquities to the insight that secularism may not have got religion quite right, from a return to sociological and anthropological methods to reflections on the philosophical underpinnings of our enterprise, from neuroscience to aesthetics, the papers here are a litmus test of the current state of modern mythmaking and the kinds of chronicle we now want to write in relation to some of the fundamental stakes invested in Greek art, as well as being a testimony to the enduring power of antiquity.

Corpus Christi College, Oxford / University of Chicago