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Style

By MEYER SCHAPIRO

I

In style is meant the constant form—and sometimes the constant elements, qualities, and expression—in the art of an individual or a group. The term is also applied to the whole activity of an individual or society, as in speaking of a "life-style" or the "style of a civilization.

For the archaeologist, style is exemplified in a motive or pattern, or in some directly grasped quality of the work of art, which helps him to localize and date the work and to establish connections between groups of works or between cultures. Style here is a symptomatic, not the non aesthetic feature of an artifact. It is studied more often as a diagnostic means than for its own sake as an important constituent of culture. For dealing with style, the archaeologist has relatively few aesthetic and phylogenetic terms.

To the historian of art, style is an essential object of investigation. He studies its inner correspondences, its evolution, and the problems of its formation and change. He, too, uses style as a criterion of the date and place of origin of works, and as a means of tracing relationships between schools of art. But the style is, above all, a system of forms with a quality and a meaningful expression through which the personality of the artist and the broad outlook of a group are visible. It is also a vehicle of expression within the group, communicating and fixing certain values of religious, social, and moral life through the emotional suggestiveness of forms. It is, besides, a common ground through which innovations and the individuality of particular works may be measured. By considering the succession of works in time and space and by matching the variations of style with historical events and with the varying features of other fields of culture, the historian of art, with the help of common-sense psychology and social theory, can account for the changes of style or specific traits. The historical study of individual and group styles also discloses typical stages and processes in the development of forms.

For the synthesizing historian of culture or the philosopher of history, the style is a manifestation of the culture as a whole, the visible sign of its unity. The style reflects or projects the "inner form" of collective thinking and feeling. What is important here is not the style of an individual or of a single art, but forms and qualities shared by all the arts of a culture during a significant span of time. In this sense one speaks of Classical or Medieval or Renaissance Man with respect to common traits discovered in the art styles of these epochs and documented also in religious and philosophical writings.

The critic, like the artist, tends to conceive of style as a value term; style
as such is a quality and the critic can say of a painter that he has "style" or of a writer that he is a "stylist." Although "style" in this normative sense, which is applied mainly to individual artists, seems to be outside the scope of historical and ethnological studies of art, it occurs here too, and should be considered seriously. It is a measure of accomplishment and therefore is relevant to understanding of both art and culture as a whole. Even a period style, which for most historians is a collective taste evident in both good and poor works, may be regarded by critics as a great positive achievement. So the Greek classic style was, for Winkelmann and Goethe, not simply a convention of form but a culturizing conception with valued qualities not possible in other styles and apparent even in Roman copies of lost Greek originals. Some period styles impress us by their deeply pervasive, complete character, their special adequacy to their content; the collective creation of such a style, like the conscious shaping of a norm of language, is a true achievement. Correspondingly, the presence of the same style in a wide range of arts is often considered a sign of the integration of a culture and the intensity of a high creative moment. Arts that lack a particular distinction or nobility of style are often said to be style-less, and the culture is judged to be weak or decadent. A similar view is held by philosophers of culture and history and by some historians of art.

Common to all these approaches are the assumptions that every style is peculiar to a period of culture and that in a given culture or epoch of culture, there is only one style or a limited range of styles. Works in the style of one time could not have been produced in another. These postulates are supported by the fact that the connection between a style and a period, inferred from a few examples, is confirmed by objects discovered later. Whenever it is possible to locate a work through nonstylistic evidence, this evidence points to the same time and place as do the formal traits, or to a culturally associated region. The unexpected appearance of the style in another region is explained by migration or trade. The style is therefore used with confidence as an independent clue to the time and place of origin of a work of art. Building upon these assumptions, scholars have constructed a systematic, although not complete, picture of the temporal and spatial distribution of style throughout large regions of the globe. If works of art are grouped in an order corresponding to their original position in time and space, their styles will show significant relationships which can be co-ordinated with the relationships of the works of art to still other features of the cultural points in time and space.

II

Styles are not usually defined in a strictly logical way. As A. F. Lyttelton says, the definition indicates the time and place of a style or its author, or the historical relation to other styles, rather than its peculiar features. Style is very continuously and resist a systematic classification into perfectly distinct groups. It is meaningless to ask exactly when a style begins. There are, of course, abrupt breaks and reactions in art, but study shows that here too there is often anticipation, blending, and continuity. Precise limits are sometimes fixed by convention for simplicity in dealing with historical problems or in isolating a type. In a style of development the artificial division may even be designated by numbers—Styles I, II, III. But the single name given to the style of a period rarely corresponds to a clear and universally accepted characterization of a type. Yet direct acquaintance with an analyzed work will often permit us to recognize other objects of the same origin, just as one recognizes a face to be native or foreign. This fact points to a degree of continuity in art that is the basis of all stylistic investigation. Through careful description and comparison and though formation of a richer, more refined typology adapted to the conditions of development, it has been possible to reduce the areas of vagueness and to advance our knowledge of styles.

Although there is no established system of analysis and writers will stress one or another aspect according to their viewpoint or problem, in general the description of a style refers to three aspects of art: form elements or notation, form relationships, and qualities (including an all-over quality which may call the "expression").

The conception of style is not arbitrary but has arisen from the experience of investigation. In correlating works of art with an individual or culture, the three aspects provide the broadest, most stable, and therefore most reliable criteria. They are also the most pertinent to modern theory of art, although not in the same degree for all viewpoints. Technique, subject matter, and material may be characteristic of certain groups of works and will sometimes be included in definitions; but more often these features are not so peculiar to the art of a period as the formal and qualitative ones. It is easy to imagine a decided change in material, technique, or subject matter accompanied by little change in the basic style or, where these are constant, we observe that they are less responsive to new aesthetic aims. A method of line-cutting will change less rapidly than the medium of a style. It is the formal aspects which are the operations as such that are important for description of the style. The materials are significant mainly for the textural quality and color, although they may affect the conception of the forms. For the subject matter, we observe that quite different themes—portraits, still lifes, landscapes—will appear in the same style.

It must be said, too, that form elements or motives, although very striking and essential for the expression, are not sufficient for characterizing a style. The pointed arch is common to Gothic and Islamic architecture, and the round arch to Roman, Byzantine, Romanesque, and Renaissance buildings. In order to distinguish these styles, one must also look for features of another order and, above all, for different ways of combining the elements.

Although some writers conceive of style as a kind of syntax or compositional pattern, which can be analyzed mathematically, in practice one has been unable to do without the vague language of qualities in describing styles. Certain features of light and color in painting are most conveniently specified in qualitative terms and even as tertiary (intersensory) or physiognomic qualities, like cool and warm, gay and sad. The habitual span of light and dark, the intervals between colors in a particular palette—very important for the structure of a work—are distinct relationships between elements, yet not comprised in a compositional schema of the whole. The complexity of a work is such that the description of forms is often incomplete on essential points, limiting itself to a rough account of a few relationships. It is still simpler, as well as more relevant to aesthetic experience, to distinguish lines as hard and soft than to give measurements of their substance. For precision in characterizing a style, these qualities are graded with respect to intensity by comparing different examples directly or by reference to a
standard work. Where quantitative measurements have been made, they tend to confirm the conclusions reached through direct qualitative descriptions. Nevertheless, we have no doubt that, in dealing with qualities, much greater precision can be reached.

Analysis applies aesthetic concepts current in the teaching, practice, and criticism of contemporary art; the development of new viewpoints and problems in the latter directs the attention of students to unnoticed features of older styles. But the study of works of other times also influences modern concepts through discovery of aesthetic variants unknown in our own art. As a criticism, so in historical research, the problem of distinguishing or relating two styles discloses unsuspected, subtle characteristics and suggests new concepts of form. The postulate of continuity in culture—a kind of inertia in the physical sense—leads to a search for common features in successive styles that are ordinarily contrasted as opposite poles of form; the resemblances will sometimes be found not so much in obvious aspects as in hidden common lines—the line patterns of Renaissance compositions recall features of the older Gothic style, and in contemporary abstract art one observes form relationships like those of Impressionist painting.

The refinement of style analysis has come about in part through problems in which small differences had to be disengaged and described with precision. Examples are the regional variations within the same culture; the process of historical development from year to year; the growth of individual artists and the discrimination of the works of master and pupil, originals and copies. In these studies the criteria for dating and attribution are often physical or external—matters of small importance to detail—but here, too, the general trend of research has been to look for features that can be formulated in both structural and expressive-physiognomic terms. It is assumed that the expression terms are all translatable into form and quality terms, since the expression depends on literal shapes and colors and will be modified by a small change in the latter. The forms are correspondingly regarded as vehicles of a particular style (apart from the subject matter). But the relationship here is not altogether clear. In general, the study of style tends toward an ever stronger correlation of form and expression. Some descriptions are purely morphological, as of natural objects—indeed, ornament has been characterized, like crystal, in the mathematical language of group theory. But terms like "stylized," "architectural," "naturalistic," "manecked," "baroque," are specifically human, referring to artistic processes, and imply some expressive effect. It is only by relating these to a more mathematical figure that one has been characterized as "classic" and "romantic."

III

The analysis and characterization of the styles of primitive and early historical cultures have been strongly influenced by the standards of recent Western art. Nevertheless, it may be said that the values of modern art have led to a more sympathetic and objective approach to exotic arts that was possible fifty or a hundred years ago. In the past, a great deal of primitive work, especially representation, was regarded as artless or even by sensitive people; what was valued was mainly the ornamental and the skills of particular industry. It was believed that primitive arts were childlike attempts to represent nature—attempts distorted by ignorance and by an irrational content of the monstrous and grotesque. True art was admitted only in the high cultures, where knowledge of natural form was combined with a rational ideal which brought beauty and decorativeness to the image of man. Greek art and the art of the Italian High Renaissance were the norms for judging all art, though in time the classic plan of Gothic art was accepted. India, who admired Byzantine works, and Asia in Christian Europe also "pure and precious ancient art, for, there is none in America, in Asia, none in Africa." From such a viewpoint carefull discrimination of primitive styles or a penetrating study of their structure and expression was hardly possible.

With the change in Western art during the last seventy years, naturalistic representation has lost its superior status. Basic for contemporary practice and for knowledge of past art is the insistent view that what counts in all art are the aesthetic components, the qualities and relationships of the fabricated lines, spots, colors, and surfaces. These have two characteristics: they are intrinsically expressive, and they tend to constitute an aesthetic whole. The same tendencies toward concept and expressive structure are found in the arts of all cultures. There is no privileged context or mode of representation (although the greatest works may, for reasons obscure to us, not exist in certain styles). Perfect art is possible in any subject matter or in any logical order and expressiveness, strength, and intensity or delicacy of statement. This approach is a refreshing opposition to the idea that art is an exercise for aesthetic skill or a necessary part of human activity. Modern artists feel, nevertheless, a spiritual kinship with the primitive, who is closer to them than in the past because of their ideal of frankness and integrity of expression and their desire for a simpler life, with more effective participation of the artist in collective occasions than modern society allows.

One result of the modern development of art is the introduction of an idea of expression that is not necessarily limited to the realm of the symbolic. The idea of expression as a natural act is becoming more widely accepted. Art is now one of the strongest evidences of the basic unity of mankind.

This radical change in attitude depends partly on the development of new modern styles, in which the raw material and distinctive units of operation—the plane of the canvas, the trunk of the wood, tool marks, brush strokes, connecting forms, schemes, particles and areas of pure color—are as pronounced as the elements of representation. Even before nonrepresentative styles were created, artists had become more deeply conscious of the aesthetic-constructive components of the work and far from denoted meanings. Much of the new styles recalls primitive art. Modern artists were, in fact, among the first to appreciate the works of natives as true art. The development of Cubism and Abstraction made the form problem exciting and helped to refine the perception of the creative in primitive work. Expressionism, with its high pathos, disposed our eyes to the simpler, more intense modes of expression, and together with Surrealism, which valued, above all, the irrational and instinctive in the imagination, gave a fresh interest to the products of primitive fantasy. But with all the obvious resemblances, modern paintings and sculptures differ from the primitive in structure and content. What in primitive art belongs to an established world of collective beliefs and symbols arises in modern art as an individual expression, bearing the marks of a free, experimental attitude towards form. Modern artists feel, nevertheless, a spiritual kinship with the primitive, who is closer to them than in the past because of their ideal of frankness and integrity of expression and their desire for a simpler life, with more effective participation of the artist in collective occasions than modern society allows.
ment has been a tendency to slight the content of past art; the most realistic representations are contemplated as pure constructions of lines and colors. The observer is often indifferent to the original meanings of works, although he may enjoy them as a vague sentiment of the poetic and religious. The form and expressiveness of older works are regarded, then, in isolation, and the history of an art is written as an imminent development of forms. Parallel to this trend, other scholars have carried on fruitful research into the meanings, symbols, and iconographic types of Western art, relying on a literature of mythology and religion; through these studies the knowledge of the content of art has been considerably deepened, and analogies to the character of the styles of the past have been discovered in the content. This has strengthened the view that the development of forms is not autonomous but is connected with changing attitudes and interests that appear more or less clearly in the subject manner of the art.

IV

Students observed early that the traits which make up a style have a quality in common. They all seem to be marked by the expression of the whole or by a dominant feature to which the elements have been adapted. The parts of a Greek temple have the air of a family of forms. In Baroque art, a taste for movement determines the loosening of boundaries, the instability of masses, and the multiplication of large contrasts. For many writers in a style, whether of an individual or a group, is a pervasive, rigorous unity. Investigation of style is often a search for hidden correspondences explained by an organizing principle which determines both the character of the parts and the patterning of the whole. This approach is supported by the experience of the student in identifying a style from a small random fragment. A bit of carved stone, the profile of a molding, a few drawn lines, or a single letter from a piece of writing often possesses for the observer the quality of the complete work and can be dated precisely, before these fragments, we have the conviction of insight into the original whole. In a similar way, we recognize by its intrinsiveness an added or repaired detail in an old work. The feel of the whole is found in the small parts.

I do not know how far experiments in matching parts from works in different styles would confirm this view. We may be dealing only with some of the observations, with a microstructural level in which similarity of parts only points to the homogeneity of a style or a technique, rather than to a complex unity in the aesthetic sense. Although personal, the painter's touch, described by constants of pressure, rhythm, and size of strokes, may have no obvious relation to other unique characteristics of the larger forms. There are styles in which large parts of a work are conceived and executed differently, without destroying the harmony of the whole. In African sculpture an exceedingly naturalistic, smoothly carved head rises free and stark against the more abstract body. A normative aesthetic might regard this as imperfect work, but it would be hard to justify this view in Western paintings of the late century, realistic figures and landscapes are set against a gold background, which in the Middle Ages had a spiritual sense. In Islamic art, a style in certain African and Oceanic styles, forms of great clarity and simplicity in three dimensions—metal vessels and animals or the domes of buildings—have surfaces spun with rich many patterns; in Gothic and Baroque art, on the contrary, a complex surface treatment is associated with a correspondingly complicated silhouette of the whole. In

In East Asia the proportions of figures are not submitted to a single aspect, as in Greek art, but have three or four distinct systems of proportioning existing within the same sculpture, varying with the size of the figure.

Such variation within a style is also known in literature, sometimes in great works, like Shakespeare's plays, prose and prose of different texture occur together. French readers of Shakespeare, with the model of their own domestic drama before them, were disturbed by the elements of comedy in Shakespeare's tragedies. We understand this contrast as a necessity of the content; it represents the poet's conception of man—man's different modes of expression per-
eval objects. It should be said, however, that some styles, by virtue of their open, irregular forms, can tolerate the unfinished and heterogeneous better than others. Just as the single work may possess parts that we would judge to belong to different styles, if we found them in separate contexts, so an individual may produce during the same short period works in what are regarded as two styles. An obvious example is the writing of bilingual authors or the work of the same man in different arts or even in different genres of the same art—monumental and easel painting, dramatic and lyric poetry. A large work by an artist who works mainly in the small, or a small work by a master of large forms, can deceive an expert in styles. Not only will the touch change, but also the expression and method of grouping. An artist is not present in the same degree in everything he does, although some traits may be constant. In the sixteenth century, some artists have changed their styles so radically during a few years that it would be difficult, if not impossible, to identify those as works of the same hand, should their authorship be forgotten. In the case of Picasso, two styles—Cubism and a kind of classicizing naturalism—seem each to have been noticed at the same time. One might discover common characters in small features of the two styles—in qualities of the brushstroke, the span of intensity, or in subtle constancies of the spacing and tones—but these are not the elements through which either style would ordinarily be characterized. Even then, in a statistical account small and large samples of a population give different results, so in works of different scale of parts by one artist the scale may influence the frequency of the unit elements or the form of the small units. The modern experience of stylistic variability and of the inhomogeneous within an art style will perhaps lead to a more refined concept of style. It is evident, at any rate, that the conception of style as a visibly unfixed constant rests on a particular norm of stability of style and size from the large to the small forms, as the whole becomes more complex.

What has been said here of the limits of uniformity of structure in the single work and in the works of an individual also applies to the style of a group. The group style, like a language, often combines elements that belong to different historical strata. While research looks for criteria permitting one to distinguish accurately the works of different groups and to correlate a style with other characteristics of a group, there are cultures with two or more collective styles of art at the same moment. This phenomenon is often associated with arts of different function or with different classes of artists. The arts practiced by women are of another style than those of the men; religious art differs from profane, and civic from domestic, and in higher cultures the stratification of social classes often entails a variety of styles not only with respect to the rural and urban, but within the same urban community. This diversity is clear enough today in the Baroque style, but the Baroque style—the Baroque is a mass-commercial, and a free avant-garde art. But more striking still is the enormous range of styles within the latter—although a common denominator will undoubtedly be found by future historians.

While some critics judge this heterogeneity to be a sign of an unstable society, it may be regarded as a necessary and valuable consequence of the individual's freedom in choice and of the world's scope of models that permits a greater interaction of styles than was ever possible before. The present diversity is intense and intensifies a condition already noticed in the preceding stage of our culture, including the Middle Ages and the Renaissance, which are held up as models of close integration. The unity of style that is contrasted with the present diversity of style is appropriate to particular aims and conditions; to achieve a style would be impossible without losing the most cherished values of our culture.

If we pass to the relation of group styles of different visual arts in the same period, we observe that, while the Baroque is remarkably similar in architecture, sculpture, and painting, in other periods, e.g., the Carolingian, the early Romanesque, and the modern, these arts differ in essential respects. In England, the drawing and painting of the tenth and eleventh centuries—a time of great accomplishment, when England was a leader in European art—are characterized by an enthusiastic linear style of energetic, celtic movement, while the architecture of the same period is inert, massy, and closed and is organized on other principles. Such variety has been explained as a sign of immaturity, but one can point to similar contrasts between two arts in later times, for example, in Holland in the seventeenth century, where Rembrandt and his school were contemporary with classicizing Renaissance buildings.

When we compare the styles of arts of the same period in different media—music, painting, the differences are no less striking. But there are rules with a far-reaching unity, and they have engaged the interest of scholars more than the examples of diversity. The concept of the Baroque has been applied to architecture, sculpture, painting, music, poetry, drama, epic, and even philosophy and science. The Baroque style has given its name to the entire culture of the seventeenth century, although it does not exclude contrary tendencies within the same country, as well as a great individuality of national arts. Such styles are the most fascinating to historians and philosophers, who admire in this great spectacle of unity the power of a guiding idea or attitude to impose a common form upon the most varied contexts. The dominant style-giving force is identified by some historians with a world outlook common to the whole society; by others with a particular institution, like the church or the absolute monarchy, which under certain conditions becomes the source of a universal viewpoint and the organizer of all cultural life. This unity is not necessarily organic; it may be likened also, perhaps, to that of a machine with limited freedom of motion, in a complex organization the parts are unlike and the integration is more a matter of functional interdependence than of the reproduction of the same pattern in all the organs.

Although so vast a unity of style is an impressive accomplishment and seems to point to a special consciousness of style—the forms of art being felt as a necessary universal language—there are moments of great achievement in a single art with characteristics more or less isolated from those of the other arts. We look in vain in England for a style of painting that corresponds to Elizabethan poetry and drama; just as in Russia in the nineteenth century there was no true parallel in painting to the great movement of literature. In these instances we recognize that the various arts have different roles in the culture and social life of a time and express their content in their own style as well as style different interests and values. The dominant outlook of a time—if it can be isolated—does not affect all the arts in the same degree, nor are all the arts equally capable of expressing the same outlook. Special conditions within an art are often strong enough to determine a deviant expression.
The organic conception of style has its counterpart in the search for biological analogies in the growth of forms. One view, patterned after the history of the organism, attributes to art a recurrent cycle of childhood, maturity, and old age, which coincides with the rise, maturity, and decline of a culture as a whole. Another view pictures the process as an unfinished evolution from the most primitive to the most advanced forms, in terms of a polarity evident at every step.

In the cyclical process each stage has its characteristic style or series of styles. In an enriched schema, for which the history of Western art is the model, the archaic, classic, baroque, impressionist, and archiacist are types of style that follow in an irreversible course. The archaic phase is believed to produce the greatest works; the succeeding ones are a decline. The same series has been observed in the Greek and Roman world and somewhat less clearly in India and the Far East. In other cultures this succession of styles is less evident, although the archaic type is widespread and is sometimes followed by what might be considered a classic phase. It is only by stretching the meaning of the term that the baroque and impressionistic types of style are discovered as tendencies within the simpler developments of primitive arts.

V

The cyclical schema of development does not apply smoothly even to the Western world from which it has been abstracted. The classic phase in the history of the organism, attributed to art a recurrent cycle of childhood, maturity, and old age, which coincides with the rise, maturity, and decline of a culture as a whole. Another view pictures the process as an unfinished evolution from the most primitive to the most advanced forms, in terms of a polarity evident at every step.

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The same names, "baroque," "classic," and "impressionist," should be applied both to a unique historical style and to a recurrent type or phase in contrasting. We will distinguish the name of the unique style from a capital, e.g., "Baroque." But this will not do away with the awkwardness of speaking of the late phase of the Baroque style of the seventeenth century as "baroque." A similar difficulty exists also with the word "styles," which is used for the common forms of a particular period and the common forms of a phase of development found in many periods.

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classical Renaissance phase and the persistent classicism in the Italian Baroque. The weaknesses of Wolfflin's system have been apparent to most students of art. Not only is it difficult to fit into his scheme the important style called "Manierism" which comes between the High Renaissance and the Baroque; but the pre-Classical art of the fifteenth century is for him an immature, unintegrated style because of its inanitiy for his terms. Modern art, too, cannot be defined through either set of terms, although some modern styles show features from both sets—there are linear compositions which are open and painterly ones which are closed. It is obvious that the linear and painterly are genuine types of style, of which examples occur, with more or less approximation to Wolfflin's model, in other periods. But the particular unity of each set of terms is not a necessary one (although it is possible to argue that the Classic and Baroque of the Renaissance are "pure" styles in which basic processes of art appear in an ideally complete and legible way). We can imagine and discover in history other combinations of five of these ten terms. Manierism, which had been ignored as a phenomenon of the world outlook and that historical circumstances, religion, politics, etc., might influence the development. But he was unable to modify his schemas and interpretations accordingly. In spite of these difficulties, one can only admire Wolfflin for his attempt to rise above the singularities of style to a general construction that simplifies and organizes the field.

To meet the difficulties of Wolfflin's scheme, a model of development which combines the dual polar structure with a cyclical pattern. He postulates a recurrent model of development—style being a style of becoming, but within each of these styles three stages: a preclassical, a classical, and a postclassical, and in the first and third stages he assumes alternative tendencies which correspond to those historical moments, like Manierism, that would be anomalous outside of Wolfflin's scheme. What is most original is Frankl's construction—and we cannot begin to indicate its rich meaning and complex articulation—is that he attempts to describe this development and its phases (and the many types of styles comprehended within his system) from the analysis of elementary forms and the limited number of possible compositions, which he has investigated with great care. His scheme is not designed to describe the actual historical development—a very irregular affair—but to provide a model of the general tendencies of development, based on the nature of forms. Numerous factors, social and psychological, constrain or divert the innate tendencies and determine other courses; but the latter are un intelligible, according to Frankl, without reference to his model and his deduction of the formal possibilities.

Frankl's book—work of over a thousand pages—appeared unfortunately at a moment (1808) when it could not meet the attention it deserved; and it is one that it has been practically ignored in the literature, although it is one of the most serious attempts in recent years to create a systematic foundation for the study of art forms. No other writer has analyzed the types of style so thoroughly.

In spite of their insights and ingenuity in constructing models of development, the theoreticians have had relatively little influence on investigation of special problems, perhaps because they have provided an adequate bridge from the model to the unique historical development of the cultural form and its varied developments. The principles by which are explained the formal similarities in development are of a different order from those in which the singular facts are explained. The essential motion and the motion due to supposedly disturbing factors belong to different worlds; the first is inherent in the morphology of styles, the second in psychological or social ones. It is as if, in the field of aesthetics; there were two different sets of laws: one for irregular movements and one for regular ones; or another for the first and another for the second, in dealing with different phenomena. Hence those who are most concerned with a unified approach to the study of art have split the history of style into two aspects which cannot be derived from each other or from some common principle. Parallel to the theorists of cyclical development, other scholars have approached the development of styles as a continuous, long-term evolutionary process. Here, too, there are stages and stages and stages of a universal, though not cyclical, process; but the poles are those of the earliest and latest stages and are deduced from a definition of the artist's goal or the nature of art or from a psychological theory.

The first students to investigate the history of primitive art conceived the latter as a development between two poles, the geometrical and the naturalistic. They were supported by observation of the broad growth of art in the historical cultures from geometric or simple, stylized forms to more natural ones; they were sustained also by the idea that the most naturalistic styles of all belonged to the highest type of culture, the most advanced in scientific knowledge, and the most capable of representing the world in accurate images. The process in art agreed with the analogous development in nature from the simple to the complex and the complex to the simple, from the growth of the child's drawings in our own culture from schematic or geometrical forms to naturalistic ones. The origins of certain early Greek and Egyptian styles followed this principle.

It is challenging and amusing to consider the fact that the Paleolithic cave paintings, the oldest known art, are marvels of representation (whatever the elements of schematic form in those works, they are more naturalistic than the succeeding tempera movements paralleled by the growth of the cultures). It is equally true that the twelfth century naturalistic forms have given way to "abstraction" and so-called "subjective" styles. But, apart from these paradoxical exceptions, one could observe in historical
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Lévy has analyzed the general principles of representation in early art and explained their stages as progressive steps in a steady change from conceptualization, based on memory image, to perspective representation, according to direct perception of objects. Since the structure of the memory image is the same as the natural, the representations based on it psychological process will exhibit certain features: (1) the shape and arrangement of figures and their parts are limited to a few typical forms; (2) the shapes are schematized in regular linear patterns; (3) representation proceeds along the same path, whether the line is an independent contour or the image of a uniformly colored area; (4) where colors are used, they are not gradation of light and shadow; (5) the parts of a figure are presented to the observer in their broadest aspect; (6) in compositions the figures, with few exceptions, are shown with a minimum of overlapping of their main parts; the real succession of figures is the representation of the three-dimensional space in which an action takes place more or less abstractly. 

While criticisms may be made of Lévy's notion of a memory image as the source of these peculiarities, his amount of archaic representation as a fixed type, with a characteristic structure, as a generally valuable; it alludes to the generalized process of the development of representation the memory image is the source of memory image, nor does it help to understand why some cultures exist beyond them and others, like those for many centuries. Limited by the conventional view and a naturalistic representation, Lévy ignored the perfection and expressiveness of archaic works. Neglecting the specific content of the representations, this approach fails to recognize the role of the content and of emotional factors in the development of the art of primitive cultures. But these limitations do not lessen the importance of Lévy's book in defining so clearly a widespread type of archaic representation and in tracing the stages of its development into a more naturalistic art.

I may mention here that the reverse process of the conversion of naturalistic to archaic forms is merely a process of the conversion of archaic to naturalistic style; are copied by primitives, colonials, provincials, and the untrained in the high cultures, can also be formulated through Lévy's principles.

We must mention, finally, as the most constructive and imaginative of the historians who have tried to embrace the whole of artistic development as a single continuous process, Alois Riegl, the author of Stilfragen and Die pietrokratische Kunstindustrie. Riegl was especially concerned with transitions that mark the beginning of a world-historical epoch (the Old Oriental to the Hellenic, the ancient to the medieval). He gave up not only the view that the later phases of a cycle as a decline but also the conception of closed cycles. In late Roman art, which was considered decadent, he found a necessary creative link between the two great stages of an open development. His account of the process is like Wölfflin's, however, though perhaps independent, he found the formative view that the basic evolution two types of style, the "haptic" (tactile) and the "optic" (or painterly, impressionistic), which coincide broadly with the poles of Wölfflin's shorter cycles. The process of development from the haptic to the optic is observable in each epoch, but only as part of a longer process, of which the great stages are millennial and correspond to...
whole cultures. The history of art is, for Riegl, an endless necessary movement from representation based on vision of the object and its parts as proportions, tangible, discrete, and self-sufficient, to the representation of the whole perceptual field as a directly given, but more distant, continuum with emerging parts, with an increasing role of the spatial voids, and with a more evident reference to the knowing subject as a constituting factor in perception. This artistic process is also described by Riegl in terms of a faculty psychology: will, feeling, and thought are the successive dominants in shaping our relations to the world; it corresponds in philosophy to the change from a predominantly objective to a subjective outlook.

Riegl does not study this process simply as a development of naturalism from an archaic to an impressionistic stage. Each phase has its special formal and expressive problems, and Riegl has written remarkably penetrating pages on the intimate structure of styles, the principles of composition, and the relations of figure to ground. In his systematic account of ancient art and the art of the early Christian period, he has observed common principles in archaic composition, in archaic painting, and ornament, sometimes with surprising acuteness. He has also succeeded in showing unexpected relationships between different aspects of a style. In a work on Dutch group portraits of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, a theme that belongs to art and social history, he has carried through a most delicate analysis of the changing relations between the objective and the subjective elements in portraiture and in the correspondingly variable mode of representing a represented group which is progressively more attentive to the observer. His motivation of the process and his explanation of its shifts in time and space are vague and often fantastic. Each great phase corresponds to a racial disposition. The history of Western art, from the time of the Old Oriental kingdoms to the present day, is divided into three great periods, characterized by the successive predominance of will, feeling, and thought, in Oriental, Classical, and Western Men. Each race plays a prescribed role and retires when its part is done, as if participating in a symphony of world history. The apparent deviations from the expected continuities are saved for the system by a theory of purposeful repetition which prepares a people for its advanced role. The division of cultural and religious factors in art is judged to be simply a parallel manifestation of a corresponding process in these other fields rather than a possible cause. The basic, immanent development from an objective to a subjective standpoint governs the whole of life, that all contemporary fields have a deep unity with respect to a common determining process.

This brief summary of Riegl's ideas hardly does justice to the richness of his work, and especially to his conception of art as an active creative process in which new forms arise from the artist's will. The factual short developments, especially in anarchic linear type of representation to a more "pictorial" style. Wherever there is a progressive naturalistic art, i.e., one which becomes increasingly naturalistic, we find in the process stages corresponding broadly to the archaic, classic, baroque, and impressionist in Western art. Although all the styles in the West are not adequately described in terms of their method of representation, they embody cyclical advances in range or method of representation from a first stage of schematic, so-called "conceptual," representation of isolated objects to a later stage of continuous representation in time and space, movement, light and shadow, and atmosphere.

In describing the Western development of art, Riegl isolates different aspects of art for the definition of the three principal types of art. In several theories and the moment of representation is the main source of the terms; in others
viewpoint appears in the program of functionalist architecture and design. It is also behind the older explanation of the Gothic style of architecture as a rational system derived from the rib construction of vaults. Modern sculptors who adhere closely to the block, exploiting the texture and grain of the material and showing the marks of the tool, are supporters of this theory of style. It is related to the immense role of the technological in our society; modern standards of efficient production have become a norm in art.

There is no doubt that these practical conditions account for some peculiarities of style. They are important also in explaining similarities in primitive and folk arts which appear to be independent of diffusion or imitation of styles. But they are of less interest for highly developed arts. Wood may limit the sculptor's forms, but we know a great variety of styles in wood, some of which even conceal the substance. Riegel observed long ago that the same forms occurred within a culture in works of varied technique, materials, and use; it is this common style that the theory in question has failed to explain. The Gothic style is, broadly speaking, the same in buildings, sculptures of wood, ivory, and stone, panel paintings, stained glass; miniatures, metalwork, enamels, and textiles. It may be that in some instances a style created in one art under the influence of the techniques, material, and function of particular objects has been generalized by application to all objects, techniques, and materials. Yet the material is not always prior to the style but may be chosen because of an ideal of expression and artistic quality or for symbolism. The hard substances of old Egyptian art, the use of gold and other precious substances in arts of power, the taste for steel, concrete, and glass in modern design are not external to the artist's first goal but part of the original conception. The compactness of the sculpture cut from a tree trunk is a quality that is already present in the artist's idea before he begins to carve. For simple compact forms appear clay figures and in drawings and paintings where the matter does not limit the design. The compactness may be regarded as a necessary trait of an archaic or a "haptic" style in Lowy or Riegl's sense.

Turning away from material facts, some historians find in the context of the work of art the source of its style. In the arts of representation, a style is often associated with a distinct body of subject matter, drawn from the sphere of ideas or experience. Thus in Western art of the fourteenth century, when a new iconography of the life of Christ and of Mary was created in which themes of suffering were favored, we observe new patterns of line and color, which possess a more lyrical, pathetic aspect than did the preceding art. In our own time, a taste for the constructive and rational in industry has led to the use of mechanical subjects and a style of forms conceived by coolness, precision, objectivity, and power.

The style in these examples is viewed by many writers as the objective side of the subject matter or of its governing idea. Style, then, is the means of communication, a language not only in a system of devices for conveying a precise message by representing or expressing an idea. It is also a qualitative whole which is capable of suggesting the diffuse connotation as well as the specific, which can become intrinsic in the subject matter or of its governing idea. By an object of imagination, the artist discovers the elements and formal relationships which will express the values of the content and look right artistically. Of the attempts made in this direction, the most successful will be repeated and developed as a norm.

The relationship of content and style is more complex than appears in this theory. There are styles in which the correspondence of the expression and the values of the particular subjects is not all obvious. If the difference between pagan and Christian art is explained by the distance in religious content, there is nevertheless a long period of time—in fact, many centuries—during which Christian subjects are represented in the style of pagan art. A little later, the Libri Carolini speak of the difficulty of distinguishing images of Mary and Venus without the book. This may be due to the fact that a general outlook of late paganism, not fundamental than the religious doctrine, was still shared by Christians in the new religion, while important intellectual transformations have not changed the basic attitudes and ways of thinking. Or it may be that the function of art within the religious life was too slight, for not all concepts of the religion find their way into art. But even later, when the Christian style had been established, there were developments in art toward a more naturalistic form and toward the invention of elements of ancient pagan style which were incompatible with the new idea of the religion.

A style that arises in connection with a particular content often becomes an accepted mode governing all representations of the period. The Gothic style applied to religious and secular works alike and, if it is true that no one building in that style has the expression of a cathedral interior, it is that painting and sculpture reflect the religious and secular images are hardly formed. On the other hand, the period of a style less pervasive than the Gothic, different idioms or dialects from are used for different fields of content, was observed in the distinction of the concept of stylistic unity.

It is such observations that have led students to modify the simple equation of style and the expressive values of a subject matter, according to which the style is the vehicle of the main meanings of the work of art. Instead, the meaning of content has been extended, and attention has been fixed on broader attitudes or general ways of thinking and feeling, which are believed to shape a style. The style is then viewed as a concrete embodiment or projection of emotional dispositions and habits of thought common to the whole culture. The content as a parallel product of the same viewpoint will therefore often exhibit qualities and structures like those of the style.

These world views or ways of thinking and feeling are usually abstracted by the historian from the philosophical systems and metaphysics of a period or from theology and literature and even from science. Themes like the relation of subject and object, spirit and matter, soul and body, man and nature or God, and conceptions of time and space, self, and cosmos are typical fields from which are derived the definitions of the world view (or Denkweise) of a period or culture. The latter is then documented by illustrations from many fields, but some writers have attempted to derive it from the works of art themselves. One searches in a style for qualities that can be matched with some aspect of thinking or a world view. Sometimes it is based on a priori deduction of possible world views, and mostly is a limited number of solutions of metaphysical problems; or a typology of the possible attitudes of the individual to the world and to his own existence is matched with a typology of styles. We have seen how Riegel apportioned the three faculties of will, feeling, and thought among three races and three major styles. The attempts to derive style from thought are often too vague to yield...
more than suggestive *opusculum*; the method breeds analogical speculations which do not hold up under detailed critical study. The theory of the analogical doctrine drawn between the Gothic cathedral and scholastic theology is an example. The common element in these two contemporary creations has been found in their structural forms and in their irrationality, their idealism and their naturalism, their encyclopedic completeness and their striving for infinity, and recently in their dialectical method. Yet one hesitates to reject such analogies in principle, since the cathedral belongs to the same religious sphere as does contemporary theology. It is when these ways of thinking and feeling or world views have been formulated as the outlook of a religion or dominant institution or class of which the myths and values are illustrated or symbolized in the work of art that the general intellectual content seems a more promising field for explanation of style. But the content of a work of art often belongs to another region of experience than the one in which both the period and the dominant or the analogical content of an art have been formed, an example is the secular art of a period in which religious ideas and rituals are primary, and, conversely, the religious art of a secularized culture. In such cases we see how important for a style of art is the character of the dominant in culture, especially of institutions. Not the content as such, but the content as part of a dominant set of beliefs, ideas, and interests, supported by institutions and the forms of everyday life, shapes the common style.

Although the attempts to explain styles as an artistic expression of a world view or mode of thought are often a drastic reduction of the concreteness and richness of art, they have been helpful in revealing unsuspected levels of meaning in art. They have established the practice of interpreting the style itself as an inner content of the art, especially in the nonrepresentational arts. They correspond to the vision of modern artists that the art elements and structure are a deeper meaningful whole related to the physical views.

VII

The theory that the world view or mode of thinking and feeling is the source of long-term constants in style is often formulated as a theory of racial or national character. I have already referred to such concepts in the work of Wolfflin and Riegl. They have been common in European writing on art for over a hundred years and have played a significant role in promoting national consciousness and race feeling. The art works of art are the chief concrete evidences of the affective world of the ancestors. The persistent teaching that German art is by nature tense and rational, that its greatness depends on fidelity to the racial character, has helped to produce an acceptance of these traits as a destiny of the people. This concept of style is evident from analysis of the history and geography of style, without reference to biology. The so-called "constant" is less constant than the racially (or nationally) minded historians have assumed. German art includes Classicism and the Black Forest style, as well as the works of Gour猥ce and the modern Expressionists. During the periods of most pronounced German character, the extension of the style hardly coincided with the boundaries of the preponderant physical type or with the recent national boundaries. This discrepancy holds for the whole art which is paired with the German as a polar opposite. Nevertheless, there are striking occurrences in the art of a region or nation which have not been explained. It is astonishing to observe the resonant tendencies of character and feeling. Such a theory, concerned with the elements of expression and structure, should affect the affects and dispositions determine choice of forms. Historians have not waited for experimental psychology to support their physiognomic interpretations of style, but, like the thoughtful artists, have resorted to intuitive judgments, relying on direct experience of art. Building up an unsystematic, empirical knowledge of forms, expressions, affects, and qualities, they have tried to control these judgments by constant comparison of works and by reference to contemporary sources of information about the content of the art, assuming that the attitudes which govern the latter must also be projected in the style. The interpretation of Classical style is not founded simply on firsthand experience of Greek buildings and sculptures; it rests also on knowledge of Greek language, literature, religion, mythology, philosophy, and history, which provide an independent picture of the Greek world. But this picture is, in turn, refined and enriched by experience of the visual arts, and our insight is sharpened by knowledge of the very different arts of the neighboring peoples and of the results of attempts to copy the Greek models at later times under other conditions. Today, after the work of nearly two centuries of scholars, a sensitive mind, with relatively little information about Greek culture, can respond directly to the "Greek mind" in those ancient buildings and sculptures. In physiognomic interpretations of group styles, there is a common assumption that is still problematic: that the psychological explanations of unique features in a modern individual's art can be applied to a whole culture in which the same or similar features are characteristics of a group or period style, like the Romantic style.
with closely crowded elements in repeat patterns, we can explain similar tendencies in the art of a historic or primitive culture by a schizophrenic tendency or dominant schizophrenic personality type in that culture? We are inclined to doubt such interpretations for two reasons. First, we are not sure that this pattern is uniquely schizophrenic in modern individuals; it may represent a component of the psychotic personality which also exists in other temperaments as a tendency associated with particular emotional contents or problems. Secondly, this pattern, originating in a single artist of schizophrenic type, may crystallize as a common convention, accepted by other artists and the public because it satisfies a need and is most adequate to a special problem of decoration or representation, without entailment, however, a notable change in the broad habits and attitudes of the group. This convention may be adopted by artists of varied personalities, who will apply it in distinct ways, filling it with its individual content and expression.

A good instance of this relationship between the psychotic, the normal individual, and the group is the practice of reading object forms in relatively formless spots, as in hallucinations in psychological tests. Leonardo da Vinci proposed this method to artists as a means of invention. It was practiced in China, and later in the West. Today it has become a standard method for artists of different character. In the painter who first introduced the practice and exploited it most fully, it may correspond to a personal disposition; but for many others it is an established technique. What is personally significant is not the practice itself but the kinds of spots chosen and what is seen in them; attention to the latter discloses a great variety of individual reactions. If art is regarded as a projective technique—and some artists today think of their work in these terms—interpretation of the work gives the same result as a projective test. The tests are designed as to reduce the number of elements that depend on space and environment, and form. But the work of art is very much conditioned by these factors. Hence, in discussing the personal expression in a work of art, one must distinguish between those aspects that are conventional and those that are clearly individual. In dealing with the style of a group, however, we consider only such superindividually aspects, abstracting from the personal variants. How, then, can we apply to the interpretation of the style concepts from individual psychology?

It may be said, of course, that the established norms of a group style are genuine parts of an artist's outlook and response and can be approached as the elements of a modal personality. In the same way the habits and attitudes of scientists that are required by their profession may be an important part of their characters. But do such traits constitute the typical ones of the culture or society as a whole? Is an art style that has crystallized as a result of special problems necessarily as expression of the whole group? Or is it open to the common outlook and everyday interests of the entire group that its content and style can be representative?

A common tendency in the phasing nomadic approach to group style has been to interpret all the elements of the art as expressions, the black as positive features and the white as negative features. This has been based on the absence of a horizon and of a consistent perspective in paintings judged to be symptomatic of an attitude of time in actual life. The limited space in Greek art is interpreted as a fundamental trait of Greek personality. Yet this blankness of the background, we have seen, is common to many styles; it is found in prehistoric art, in Old Oriental art, in the Far East, in the Middle Ages, and in all primitive painting and relief. The fact that it seems in ancient children's drawings and the drawings of untrained adults suggests that it belongs to a universal primitive level of representation. But it should be observed that this is also the method of illustration in the most shared scientific work in the past of today.

This fact does not mean that representation is wholly without expressive personal features. A particular treatment of the "empty" background may become a powerful expressive factor. Cautious study of so systematic a method of representation as geometrical perspective shows that within such a scientific system there are many possible dates; the position of the eye-level, the intensity of convergence, the distance of the viewer from the picture plane—all these are expressive choices within the conditions of the system. Moreover, the existence of the system presupposes a degree of interest in the environment which is already a natural gift with a long history.

The fact that an art represents a re- viewed world does not allow us to ignore the eye of the artist. We would have to suppose, if this were true, that in Islam people were concerned with the human body, and that the present vogue of "abstract" art exceeds a general indifference to the

As interesting evidence of the limitation of the assumed identities of the space or time structure of works of art individuals is the way in which painters and sculptors have left us no signed works or biographies of artists; but it is the favored view of many students of the art of the last four centuries in Europe. It may be questioned whether it is ap
Style

The distinctiveness of Greek art among the arts of the ancient world can hardly be separated from the forms of Greek society and the city-state. The impor-
tance of the higher class, with its spec-
tialization in society and its mode of life, for the medieval and early Rena-
sance art of Florence and for Dutch art of the 17th century, is a com-
plex imaginative transposition of class roles and needs, which affects the special field—religion, mythology, or civic life—that provides the high themes of art.

The great interest of the Marxist approach lies not only in the attempt to interpret the historically changing relations of art and economic life in the light of a general theory of society but also in the weight given to the differences and conflicts within the social group as motors of development, and to the effects of these on outlook, religion, morality, and philosophical ideas.

Only broadly sketched in Marx's works, the theory has rarely been applied systematically in a true spirit of investigation, such as we see in Marx's economic writings. Marxist writing on art has suffered from schematic and premature formulations and from crude judgments imposed by loyalty to a political line.

A theory of style adequate to the psychological and historical problems has still to be created. It waits for a procedure of the principles of form construction and expression and for a unified theory of the processes of social life in which the practical means of life as well as emotional behavior are comprised.

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Applicable to cultures in which the in-
dividual has less mobility and range of personal action and in which the artist is not a deviant type. The main diffi-
culty, however, arises from the fact that similar stylistic trends often appear in-
dependently in different arts at the same time, that great contemporary artists in the same field—Leonardo, Michelangelo, Raphael—show a parallel tendency of style, although each artist has a personal form; and that the new outlook expressed by a single man of genius is anticipated or prepared in

Proceeding works and thought. The great artists of the Gothic period and the Renaissance constitute families with a common heritage and trend. Decisive changes are most often associated with original works of outstanding quality, but the new direction of style and its acceptance are unattainable without reference to the conditions of the move-
cent and the common ground of the art.

These difficulties and complexities have not led scholars to abandon the psychological approach; long experi-
ence with art has established as a plaus-
able principle the notion that an in-
dividual style is a personal expression; and continued research has found many con-
firmations of this, wherever it has been possible to control statements about the personality, built upon the work, by referring to actual information about the artist. Similarly, common traits in the art of a culture or nation can be matched with some features of social life, ideals, customs, general dis-
positions. But such correlations have been of single elements or aspects of a style with single traits of a people; it is rarely a question of wholes. In our own culture styles have changed very rapidly, yet the current notions about group traits do not allow sufficiently for corresponding changes in the behavior patterns or provide such a for-
mulation of the group personality that one can deduce from it how that per-
sonality will change under new con-
tions.

It seems that for explanation of the styles of the higher cultures, with their great variability and intense develop-
ment, the concepts of group personality current today are too rigid. They ut-


VIII

We turn last to explanations of style by the forms of social life. The idea of a connection between these forms and styles is already suggested by the framework of the history of art. In main divisions, accepted by all students, are the boundaries of social units—cultures, empires, dynastic cities, classes, churches, etc.—and peri-
ods which mark significant stages in social development. The great historical epochs of art, like antiquity, the Middle Ages, and the modern era, are the same as the epochs of economic history; they correspond to great systems, like feudalism and capitalism. Important economic and political shifts within these systems are often accompanied or followed by shifts in the forms and their styles. Religion and major world views are broadly co-
ordinated with these eras in social history.

In many problems the importance of economic, political, and ideological conditions for the creation of a group style (or of a world view that influ-
ences a style) is generally admitted.

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