RAGE AND DENIALS

COLLECTIVIST PHILOSOPHY, POLITICS, AND ART HISTORIOGRAPHY, 1890–1947

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PREFACE

I have a story to tell and a point to make. The story is a history of the debate about the ways a person's membership in a collective (such as a culture, ethnicity, or linguistic community) influences, or maybe even determines, his or her intellectual life and creativity. According to one view, human groups are merely sets of individuals; a group can exercise influence on its members only through their individual interactions with other members. According to the opposite view, human groups are more than mere sets of individuals, and a group's influence is not (always) analyzable into interactions between individuals. The book presents the history of this debate in the period 1890 to 1947, accentuating the way it affected art historiography. I have not chosen these years arbitrarily. The 1890s were the years of German historians' *Methodenstreit*, when Karl Lamprecht's polemics replaced Rankean faith in providence as a valid historiographical explanatory principle with social determinism.[1] The second limit marks the moment when scholars such as Friedrich Meinecke and Theodor Litt formulated the question of the contribution of Romantic collectivism to the rise of collectivist political ideologies. The debate between individualist and collectivist approaches to historiography has continued to reverberate until our time, and in order to complete the presentation it is important to discuss two immensely important books that came out in 1960: Hans-Georg Gadamer's *Truth and Method* and Ernst Gombrich's *Art and Illusion.* My presentation is dominated (with some exceptions) by German sources, since it is in German historiographical traditions that one finds the most comprehensive articulation of the collectivist worldview. This should not be surprising, considering the strength of German Romantic traditions. Historiographical collectivism is, after all, a variation of the Romantic worldview.

The book concentrates on art historiography because the articulations of the collectivist position in this field provide a particularly wide range of theoretical insights, whose significance by far exceeds the boundaries of

the discipline. The elusive nature of art imposes fewer limits on scholars writing about it, and it thus enables them to formulate a wider range of collectivist arguments than is the case in many (or most) other fields of history writing. For instance, dilemmas pertaining to visuality, and especially perspective, profoundly affect any attempt to understand human cognition along collectivist or individualist lines. Like few other art-historical debates, the art-historical formulation of the dilemma between individualism and collectivism has important implications for almost the entire province of the humanities. The book is not written only for art historians, and it strives to cover the wider context of the debate.

It is important to emphasize that this is a book on the history of the philosophy of (art) history; it does not merely present the views of various authors, but also strives to analyze their arguments and establish the compatibility of the various positions they articulate. The philosophical study of arguments requires a clear and sharp differentiation between concepts that is common in the history of philosophy and that readers who are used to the standards of some other fields of historical research may find rigid. In some fields of historical research, "sharp" or "rigid" differentiation between concepts is taken to indicate lack of sophistication in the interpretation of documents; however, in the history of philosophy (or analytic philosophy in general), its absence is associated with lack of intellectual rigor. A historian not used to the standards of the history of philosophy may complain about the lack of a middle ground between concepts that were originally sharply defined precisely in order to enable the examination of arguments by preventing middle-ground positions. In fact, in order to refute an argument, a historian of philosophy (or a philosopher) will often strive to show that the concepts used in its formulation *allow* middle-ground positions. It is normal for such disciplinary differences to exist between various fields of intellectual historiography: disciplines develop in accordance with the material they study. An art historian who would expect artists to be concerned with arguments and rely on sharp differentiation between concepts would often miss the point. However, this book does not deal with artworks or artists; it deals with (art) historians' discussions of the philosophy of their discipline and these discussions' metaphysical, ontological, and epistemological assumptions. It therefore requires an approach characteristic of the history of philosophy.

I have said that I also have a point to make. The point is that historians are human too. Peter Gay once wrote about the need "[t]o write a history of

[psychological] defenses, to trace their origins, analyze their personal and social transformation, allocate to each epoch and class the defenses it found most suitable," and this book attempts to be such a study.[2] I will argue that collectivist historiography is hard to separate from the contribution to self-esteem regulation that its main tenets provide for its protagonists. One often rightly emphasizes the importance of understanding the context for the proper assessment of historical documents. I will argue that a historian's own self-understanding is equally important, or maybe even more. Without knowledge of the context, one often cannot tell fact from fiction; without knowledge of oneself, one becomes a slave to one's need to generate self-reassuring fiction. The story this book tells is a warning against the damage that such ignoble needs can inflict on history writing—and it teaches us that knowing oneself is paramount in order to render service to Clio.

Introduction

ARGUMENTS

When the individualist contends that only individuals are responsible actors on the social and historical stage, the holist retorts that society is more than merely a collection of individuals. To this retort the individualist answers that there is no mysterious additional entity which turns a collection of individuals into a society; a collection of individuals is a society if there is strong interaction between them; this interaction is due to the fact that when any one individual acts (rationally) on the basis of his own aims and interests, he takes into account the existence of other individuals with aims and interests. To this the holist retorts that the individualist misses the point; that people's aims do not constitute a society but rather depend on society; so that members of different societies have different aims and interests. The individualist in turn answers that the holist misses the point, by taking the social setting as God-given rather than as explicable in terms of human action. The holist in turn argues that human action does not determine but is rather constrained by, or directed by, the social setting (perhaps because social forces are much stronger than any single individual).

—JOSEPH AGASSI, "Methodological Individualism"

Here is one way to state the old philosophical dilemma of one and many. Multitudes always consist of singulars—but are they nothing more than sums of singulars? Could a whole be more (or something else) than the sum of its parts? Rather, should we not think about parts as mere participants in a whole, the manifestations of the totality they belong to? Is it at all possible to understand singulars independently of the multitudes they belong to?

In history writing, singulars are individual historical figures, while multitudes are collectives, such as cultures, nations, ethnic groups, periods, or various kinds of social and historical contexts. So the dilemma is whether these collectives should be understood as reducible to the sets of human

beings, or whether they can have particular characters on their own, irreducible to the contribution of the individuals who participate in them. The thoughts and decisions of historical figures are certainly influenced by their social context—but should we conceive of this influence merely as the sum of a historical figure's interactions with the individuals who make up the social context? Can a culture or an epoch be more than a sum of participating individuals? Can it influence the decisions and creativity of an individual in ways that are independent of that individual's interactions with others who live in the same context? Or is there perhaps some middle ground between these two positions?

Collectivism—Individualism

Consider the question of what the Italian Renaissance was. One may conceive of the Renaissance as a period, the spirit of an era or a cultural environment that *caused* a particular kind of creativity in Italian artists and men of letters. Piero della Francesca, it may be said, used perspective in his work *because* he was a Renaissance painter. If we understand that living in the Renaissance *caused* him to paint in a certain way, the Renaissance starts to resemble a spiritual substance that somehow landed on the Italian peninsula in the early quattrocento, stayed there for two centuries, and determined the creativity of contemporary Italians. They were creative in a certain way, the explanation will say, *because* they belonged to a certain group that lived in that epoch. In other words, individual creativity is purely a manifestation of (and fully explainable by) the wider creativity typical of the collective (culture, class, race, ethnicity, period) the individual belongs to. As Ernst Gombrich observed, this view "postulates that all the manifestations of an era—philosophy, art, social structures, etc.—must be considered as expressions of an essence, an identical spirit."[1] The assumption is that the spirit of the era, culture, or group permeates and determines all activities of individuals. Oswald Spengler thus claimed that there existed a deep internal link between the invention of perspective, book printing, the credit system, and counterpoint in music; they were all manifestations of the same cultural essence.[2] Similarly, in Heinrich Wölfflin's view, to explain an artistic style means to fit its expressive character into the general history of the period and prove that its forms conform to the other manifestations of the age.[3] In Wilhelm Pinder's *Das Problem der*

Generation in der Kunstgeschichte Europas we read that Vermeer was merely painting Spinoza (i.e., the content of Spinoza's philosophy), since the painter and the philosopher were born in the same year.[4] Alois Riegl similarly related the doubling of bulls in the reliefs of Minoan Vaphio cups to dual monarchy and dual consulate as the organizational principles of some ancient states.[5] In all these cases, the collective, epoch, culture, ethnic group, and social and historical context are the primary explanatory entities, and they are assumed to permeate and determine the creativity of individuals in diverse fields of activity.

Contrary to such *collectivist* views, the *individualist* position regards collectives as *mere sums* of individuals. In that case, "Renaissance" is but a *name* for the creative thoughts, decisions, actions, and mutual interactions of millions of individual Italians who, in a certain period, were individually exposed to similar challenges, such as an intensified intellectual exchange, strong urban environments, the influx of Byzantine scholars, or the invention of the printing press. The primary explanatory unit is human individuals and their interactions, however many of them there may be. As George Boas put it, from this point of view it is wrong to explain Alexander Pope's writings by the rationalism of his times—rather, the times were rationalistic because writers like Pope wrote the way they did.[6] The context in this case does not explain *why* an individual artist, scientist, or philosopher did things the way he or she did them, but rather *how* that individual, through interaction with other individuals, acquired the skills or knowledge that enabled or motivated him or her to produce an artifact, or scientific, or philosophical theory, with certain properties. As Veronica Wedgwood put it, one can write *How* histories, but not *Why* histories:[7] Piero della Francesca *was able* to use perspective because the necessary knowledge was available at the time, and art-historical research can describe *how* he acquired this knowledge. But we cannot say that he had to use perspective *because* he was a Renaissance painter; we cannot say why he decided to use it.

The difference between collectivist and individualist historiographies is not in the individualist's denial of the existence of collectives. Certainly, nobody denies that cultures, nations, or linguistic groups exist. Rather, the dilemma pertains to the understanding of what human collectives are and the nature of their interaction with individuals. During the German historians' *Methodenstreit* of the 1890s, Karl Lamprecht argued for the collectivist position by pointing out that no statesman operating in an economy based on the exchange of natural goods can invent the institutions

necessary for a money-based economy.[8] One of his critics, Georg von Below (who also advocated collectivist views), pointed out that this was a weak argument: no individualist historian has ever made claims of this kind, since they would amount to claiming that individuals are not influenced by their environment.[9] It is beyond any doubt that human actions occur in a certain (social) context. However, the individualist historian would assert that the influence of the context has to be understood as the influence of (a set of) other individuals belonging to that context; whatever properties or manifestations collectives may have, for the individualist position they are always, at least in principle, reducible to (interactions between) the properties and individuals that constitute these collectives.[10] Individualism assumes that all talk about human collectives is *transparent* in principle—that ultimately it should always be possible to translate propositions about collectives into (sometimes maybe a huge number of) propositions about the individuals who make them up.[11] Often, the number of individuals who constitute a group and their interactions is so big that they cannot be individually surveyed by a historian—but individualist historiography will never forget that this should be possible in principle. The collectivist position denies this possibility and assumes, in various ways, that collectives (can) constitute *irreducible* explanatory units in their own right, or that the manifestations of collectives cannot be reduced to (described as) the manifestations of individuals. As Thomas Mann put it, "a nation is a metaphysical and not a social being."[12] Consider, for instance, two different ways to think about social institutions, such as languages. One may conceive of languages as collective entities that *transcend* individuals, exist on their own independently of individuals that constitute the group, and enable these individuals to communicate. In that case, the rules of grammar, which one needs to learn in order to express one's thoughts in a given language, somehow float between (or above) the members of the community and enable communication the way air enables breathing. Contrary to this view, one could see in a language a set of beliefs that its users have about the signs they can use in order to communicate their thoughts to other individuals. As a set of beliefs, a language is then a mental content shared by a large number of individuals who use it for their communication. If all individuals who could use a certain language died or lost their memories, and all the documents about the use of the language that were written by individuals were lost (so that the relevant beliefs could not be transmitted), it is hard to see how a language could continue to

exist. If this is so, then one cannot properly say that a language transcends individuals or that it is an entity in its own right. No doubt a language is a collective phenomenon, but "collective" in this case can be construed in individualist terms, as a set of beliefs shared by a group of individuals. An individual then acquires a language through interaction with other individuals. In the modern philosophy of language there exists a substantial debate about this problem, and one should mention Hilary Putnam as a proponent of the collectivist and John Searle as a proponent of the individualist perspective on language.[13]

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Collectivist Methodology

A collectivist historical explanation assumes that an individual had to act, think, or be creative in a certain way because of his or her membership in a group. According to one model, intellectual capacities and creative forces

are postulated to exist independently of the individuals in which they are instantiated, while individuals' thinking derives from the influence of such supraindividual forces. For instance, in Wilhelm Worringer's *Abstraktion und Einfühlung*, Gothic art simply came about (*entstand*) from itself, apparently without any human participation.[19] Since creativity is assumed to belong to groups independently of the individuals who constitute these groups, it is understood that groups can influence each other without any actual interaction between the individuals. This enables Worringer, in his *Griechentum und Gotik*, to describe Iranian influences on French medieval art (61), the influence of Praxiteles on Duccio (88), or even Hellenism in Chinese and Japanese art (13). Dagobert Frey summarized this position by saying that the creative subject (i.e., the artist) is an ideal entity and not an identifiable biographical person; for the study of an artwork, the biographical person is fully irrelevant.[20] According to another model, a certain property (ability or incapacity) is attributed to the individuals of a certain group that differentiates them from other individuals even when it is not clear how such differentiation could have come about. In his *Betrachtungen eines Unpolitischen*, Thomas Mann thus argued that all Germans, by their nature, have an inborn understanding of Kant's philosophy, which makes it unnecessary for them to read his works—that, at least, was why Mann never needed to study Kant.[21] This approach is particularly common among authors who promote racial, ethnic, or cultural determinism.

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Defining Explanatory Collective Entities

Formulating a collectivist historical explanation means defining the explanatory collective that determined a historical figure to produce an artifact, have certain beliefs, or act in a certain way. Some kinds of collective membership, however, produce circular explanations that are best described as toothless. If we say that Aquinas belongs to the Aristotelian tradition because

he wrote commentaries on Aristotle, then we cannot say that he wrote commentaries on Aristotle *because* he belonged to the Aristotelian tradition. Membership in a tradition is then not explanatory. In his 1920s methodology textbook for art history students, the Heidelberg professor Robert Hedicke explained that in order to understand Gothic, one needs to grasp *Gothic spiritual totality*.[32] But then, as it turns out, all we can know about "Gothic spiritual totality" we know only on the basis of those properties of Gothic monuments that "Gothic spiritual totality" is meant to explain. Similarly, Max Dvořák, in his "Idealismus und Naturalismus in der Gotischen Skulptur und Malerei," explained that Gothic art was a result of a specific understanding of space different from that in early Christian and Romantic art.[33] Again, if we ask how we can know that such an understanding of space existed in the Gothic age, the answer is that we know about it on the basis of the Gothic art that resulted from it. Explanations of this kind resemble a dialogue in Molière's *Malade imaginaire*, where opium's capacity to make people sleep is explained by its dormitive powers, while its dormitive powers are explained by their capacity to make people sleep. As early as 1920, Panofsky warned that "the 'Gothic man' or the 'primitive' on the basis of whose supposed essence a specific artwork is to be explained is in reality only a hypostasized impression, which we have derived from the same artwork."[34] In order to avoid circular pseudoexplanations, one needs to claim in a *nontrivial* way that all artists of a certain group necessarily produced artworks with specific properties. Ultimately, the selection of the explanatory collective reflects the historian's own beliefs and, often, ideological prejudices. History writing can be merely a historian's tool to contribute to some ideological agenda. It is unlikely that a Marxist historian would propose a race-based explanation; during the Weimar era, few German historians resisted the temptation to argue that the group that actually explains and determines individual creativity is ethnicity or race.[35] Such history writing sometimes says more about the background agenda of the historian than about its actual topic; throughout this book we shall see that the explanations and assumptions a historian makes sometimes provide more material for the portrait of the artist than of the sitter.

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From Chapter 3: "Art & Venom"

Race

Having embraced the ideology of the Third Reich, Frey perceived its end as a "deep crisis of the human race," as he put it in the preface to his 1946 *Grundfragen.*[10] His views about the central role of racial classification in art-historical explanations were not atypical for the time. A modern reader of Weimar era art-historical writings will note not only that they are domi-

nated by collectivist reasoning but also that the group most commonly taken to determine creativity is ethnicity or race. The division of humanity into separate species and the understanding that the historian's job is to classify them according to their creative and intellectual abilities could not fail to have sinister implications. There were, of course, opponents of racial theories. One of them was Spengler, in whose view race is irrelevant when it comes to creativity and always results from the place where one lives. He proved this by claiming, in full seriousness, that when English and Germans settled in North America, after a few generations they acquired the racial characteristics of the local Indians.[11] What differentiates a nation from other nations, he says, is not race but the sense of "we" (754); people are not zoological unities, but unities of the soul. "There are no noble races, there are only noble specimens of all races," one reads in his unpublished notes; his rejection of racial theories was an important reason for his confrontation with the Nazis after 1933.[12] Sedlmayr also made it abundantly clear that race-based art history was a waste of time; biological factors, in his view, cannot provide explanations of art-historical phenomena.[13] However, his theoretical statements and his practice in history writing did not go hand in hand. In his art-historical work, Sedlmayr was perfectly prepared to adopt racial explanations. In his post–World War II *Entstehung der Kathedrale*, he dismissed racial theories as repulsive because of their inhuman implications (328). Nevertheless, this did not prevent him from explaining Gothic art by the Celtic spirit, the *keltische Geistesart* (339). Similarly, his description of English artistic incapacities in *Verlust der Mitte* definitely has a racial tone.[14] In private communication, too, Sedlmayr is unusual because as a Nazi Party member he dismissed racial views and racial anti-Semitism. In his letters to Meyer Schapiro he stated that racial theories were nonsense; he declared himself an "anti-Jew," in political but not in racial terms.[15]

Another author whose views changed according to the circumstances was Josef Strzygowski. In his 1923 *Die Krisis der Geisteswissenschaften*, Strzygowski still advocated the study of humanity as a whole; in his view, scholarly research should be above nationalism.[16] At that time he subscribed to individualist methodology and criticized Lamprecht's view that historical research that remains at the level of singulars is not a science. Rather, he argued, historical research that does not concentrate on major historical figures fails to describe historical developments (168). The psychology of nations, he says, is not of great use for an art historian; at most, art history

may provide material for it (172). Nevertheless, even in those years his writing was explicitly anti-Semitic.[17] Later, when he strongly associated himself with the Third Reich, racial issues became his central theme.[18] In *Europas Machtkunst* he argued that art grows from race and nation (*Volk*), not from power and social institutions, such as the court, church, or academy (22). The equatorial south is incapable of education, he wrote in *Die deutsche Nordseele* (93).

It should present no surprise that the other art historians who aligned themselves with the Nazis subscribed to the view that artistic creativity results from racial background. Wilhelm Pinder in *Das Problem der Generation* (1926) writes about the racial unity of Europe and the specifically European national character (5). It was the sick fantasy of a Viking, he says, that made Van Gogh paint the way he did.[19] According to Albert Erich Brinkmann, the development and form of Western art derive from the facts of race and biology.[20] The racial constitution of art-creative regions determines art itself (20). Artistic creativity springs from the deepest racial forces of a nation or a group of nations (20). It was the extremely favorable racial foundations, for instance, that ensured the artistic and cultural creativity of Paris (36).

There should be no doubt that these kinds of views were intellectually prepared by the older generations of art historians long before the Nazis came to power. The Nazis did not invent them. The most prominent promoter of racial theories among art historians for the preceding half a century had been Heinrich Wölfflin. Throughout Wölfflin's opus one regularly finds the claims that some works of Italian art and architecture would not be attractive to "Northerners" because of their ethnic background.[21] Although national artistic creativity undergoes historical changes, the different styles of art produced by a country still have a common element that originates from the ground (*Boden*) and race, he argues; the Italian racial type is to be found at the same time behind both the Renaissance and baroque.[22] In his *Das Erklären von Kunstwerken*, we read that in spite of differences between the various epochs of German art, the identity of the same ethnic spirit (*Volksgeist*) asserts itself; in spite of differences in architectural styles, there exists a constant national way of design (9). Wölfflin's favorite example is what he considers the incomprehensibility of Raphael's *School of Athens* to "Northerners"—even though he himself (a "Northern" art historian) discusses this painting extensively in his *Klassische Kunst* (92–97). In the introduction to his *Kunstgeschichtliche Grundbegriffe*, Wölf-

flin states that questions pertaining to national sensibilities are unavoidable whenever taste for form is combined with spiritual-moral moments (9); one of the aims of the book is to determine national characters (vi), and a whole chapter is dedicated this topic (254–55). In *Italien und das Deutsche Formgefühl*, he explicitly states that what is central for art-historical explanations is the "national form and mode of representation."[23]

Kurt Gerstenberg derived his 1913 theory of *Sondergotik* from positions very similar to Wölfflin's.[24] Gerstenberg's aim was to show that German late Gothic architecture is not merely a decline from original French Gothic, but a nationally determined unity of style that stands on its own against French Gothic.[25] His leading thought, he says, is the belief that a style is not merely a historical problem, but an issue of race; not every style is a suitable expression of the essence of a specific race (xi, 133). The individuation of style results from the *Kunstwollen* of a nation (Gerstenberg uses Riegl's term) (5). Methodologically, this means that he can use formal analysis of German Gothic in order to describe German visual creativity—which is characterized, according to Gerstenberg, by the slowing of imagination, and an urge for infinity that corresponds to German essence (134, 136). One finds a further expansion of similar views in Kurt Karl Eberlein's *Was ist deutsch in der deutschen Kunst*? According to Eberlein, the soil and blood of a race create its art (9). National spirit lives in the general spirit of an epoch like a dialect of a language—and one can thus talk about German Romantic, German Gothic, German classicism, and so on (14). There are colors and forms that belong to the art of specific nations, and a German painting will be immediately recognized as such when compared with paintings of other nations (27). Expressionism is Slavic-Russian art that is falsely attributed to Germans, he says, which makes other nations think that Germans are happy with such artistic crudeness because they cannot produce better art (36–37). Similarly, cubism is Spanish-Jewish art (36), while Van Gogh's drawings are Nordic-Chinese, he claims (42).

An aspect of racial theories in the arts was the widespread belief that membership in an ethnic (tribal) subgroup further defines individual creativity into very specific details. By studying artworks, an art historian, according to this view, can even determine the details of an artist's ethnic origin (the tribal subethnic group of the ancestors). The theory was not limited to the visual arts; in his *Rembrandt als Erzieher*, Julius Langbehn thus explains Gotthold Ephraim Lessing's sympathy for the Jews by his racial background, and claims that it resulted from Lessing's ancestors'

Frisian (Dutch) origins (248). Philo-Semitism, from this point of view, is a racial characteristic of a specific Germanic tribe. In *Erklären*, Wölfflin similarly states that Ruysdael's sensibility was the result of his time and race, and claims that it is possible to determine quite accurately how his creativity differed from that of the members of other Germanic tribes (22). Similarly, according to Eberlein, the art of an ethnic group is further differentiated into smaller local communities, and even in the case of Jewish art Eberlein claims that he can differentiate between Jewish-German, Jewish-Spanish, and Jewish-French art, and so on. A fully developed example of racial art history is Dagobert Frey's *Englisches Wesen im Spiegel seiner Kunst*. The remarkable aspect of this book is that it came out in 1942, and though it is full of prejudices, they tend to be bizarre rather than negative; it is a *Sammelsurium* of examples collected with passion, carefully organized and explained by the racial background of their authors. Frey postulates strong racial causation in the visual arts and endeavors to explain specific properties of artworks by the ethnic and racial background of their authors. In the case of Vanbrugh, Frey finds English feeling for form in verticalism, emphasis of surface, clarity, and firmness (224). But in the feeling for three-dimensionality and the heaviness of the mass he finds the influence of Vanbrugh's Flemish racial background. Similarly, he believes that he can infer Hogarth's Celtic–west English racial characteristics from the use of sarcasm in his drawings (306, 313). Hogarth's drawings are English by their linearity and struggle to represent corporality, which would present no problems to Italians, he submits (318). Even for a German, Frey says, Hogarth's drawings are too weak and sweet. The rejection of the rules of proportion is characteristically English (319). The racial characteristics of English art, according to Frey, are thus linearity, verticalism, underdeveloped sense of proportion, lack of corporeality and weight, as well as lack of stability and architectonics (372–85).

Denials

Denials and appropriations are a phenomena that accompany collectivist historiographies with remarkable regularity. History writing is always more convincing if its content is not a means for the author to talk implicitly about him- or herself—while this happens almost regularly with historiographical works that rely on collectivist methodology. Very often, what

interests these historians is the special creativity of the artists, which belongs to their own group and which they deny to the members of other groups. In the conclusion of this book, it will be argued that in such situations psychoanalysis has much more to say than historical scholarship about the content of scholarly claims. For now one needs to mention that the collectivist art historiographies of the Wilhelmine and Weimar eras contain a substantial body of statements and views that are best qualified as bizarre and best understood (indeed, can only be understood) on the basis of psychoanalytic research about envy as an important diagnostic criterion of the narcissistic personality.

In general terms, the standard psychoanalytic understanding is that through envy another's qualities are experienced as a threat to one's own grandiosity.[26] One such threat obviously came from the awareness that Christianity, as Germany's official religion, was itself not of Germanic origin. Julius Langbehn in his *Rembrandt als Erzieher* had already felt compelled to explain that Germans have such attachment to Christianity because people are like their land—in his imagination, the Palestine desert is heathland like northern Germany, while the Sea of Galilee can be as stormy as the North Sea. Houston Stewart Chamberlain, the English racial theorist who lived in Germany and promoted his views on Aryan racial superiority, denied in his *Die Grundlagen des XIX Jahrhunderts* that Jesus could have been a Jew; he still did not commit himself to the claim that Jesus was Aryan.[27] A comprehensive explanation of the Nordic origin of Christianity appears in a 1908 scholarly article by Paul Haupt published in *Orientalische Litteratur-Zeitung.*[28] Haupt points out that in the eighth century B.C.E., some Aryan colonists *may* have settled in Galilee, from which he infers that Jesus (who lived in that area eight centuries later) *must* have been of the Aryan race, although he happened to be brought up in the religion of Moses. Similarly, Hans Günther, in his *Rasse und Stil*, claims that Jesus belonged to the Nordic race (60, 113). Jesus was from Galilee, he explains, where Jews were a minority and the Nordic race was present through Hittite remnants (113); Oriental peoples value the written word over the spoken word, and Jesus's repeated use of the phrase "Indeed I tell you" may indicate how foreign the Oriental race must have been to his blood (60). An even more radical explanation was proposed by Josef Strzygowski, who argued that it was Germans who invented Christianity, since this was the original religion of the Germanic North.[29] Jesus, he explains, must have lived in the Jewish diaspora in Iran in his youth and learned

there about Christianity, and this learning, in the form of Jewish *Jesustum*, was subsequently reintroduced by the Roman Church into the European North.[30] Strzygowski was an eccentric, and his most insane theories were promulgated by the propaganda machine of the Third Reich, but he was not a marginal figure; at the time he advocated these views he was a prominent emeritus of the University of Vienna. Few other authors of the era provide such a comprehensive list of topics that caused envy and denial in contemporary German intellectual life. In Strzygowski's view, for instance, the origins of Greek art are Germanic; the important theme of Nordic art is the grove of destiny, as opposed to the human form.[31] The original Acropolis needs to be interpreted in the context of Nordic art; it is a grove of destiny, but archeologists, who see in it stone and human forms, miss the point (42). The values of the Acropolis come from the North; Athens and Sparta represent the two types of Nordic man (26).

Hardly any topic, however, engendered such wide discomfort among German scholars as the Italian Renaissance. In *Italien und das Deutsche Formgefühl*, Heinrich Wölfflin described the unease that dominated the 1928 celebrations marking the four-hundredth anniversary of Dürer's death.[32] The unease was caused by the awareness that Germany's greatest visual artist sought to learn from Italy, and that an "essentially foreign art, such as Italian," exercised such a huge impact on him.[33] In the early nineteenth century, Hegel was very affirmative about the Renaissance, which he called the "Restauration."[34] But by 1938 Brinckmann observed with disapproval that German scholarship tended to reject the Renaissance.[35] "It is strange how the attitude towards the Renaissance has changed since [the First World War]," Meinecke similarly observed in a letter.[36]

Insofar as the Italian Renaissance was perceived as a cultural threat, three defense strategies were possible. One could say that the aesthetic evaluation criteria belonging to different nations are so different that Italian and German artworks are incomparable, so German art is not really inferior. Alternatively, one could deny that the Renaissance achieved anything significant, or one could appropriate the Renaissance and try to show that it was a German phenomenon. All three strategies were explored by the German art historians of the era.

Wölfflin's book cited above describes differences between the Italian and German sense of form in order to show that German visual sensibilities, and consequently art, are different than but not inferior to Italian. Like Wölfflin, Strzygowski argued that it was Dürer's weakness to follow

Italian models and believe in the geometrical construction of the beauty of the naked human body.[37] The force of Northern painting, in his view, is not in the human form but in line, light, and color. That German and Italian art should not be compared is Max Dvořák's important point as well. In his study of the Van Eyck brothers, he declares that the cult of the Renaissance is an unexplainable anomaly of historiography.[38] In his other writings, Dvořák warns against expecting objective representation from medieval art, since this means imposing on it the standards of the art of the quattro- and cinquecento.[39] For Worringer, the Renaissance was a disaster that disoriented medieval thinking and resulted in the search for scientific progress.[40] Very much like Dvořák, Worringer protests against comparisons between medieval and Renaissance artworks.[41] He argues with great passion that one cannot ascribe higher cultural achievements to Renaissance Rome than to medieval Paris of the high Gothic.[42] In the Renaissance, he claims, one does not find the sensibilities of antiquity, but merely the archaeological knowledge of Latin antiquity.[43] According to Eberlein, Renaissance influence destroyed the unity of people and culture in Germany.[44]

Denial that the Renaissance ever happened or that it mattered was another available strategy. "It is a bizarre idea to believe in the rebirth of any kind of ancient art in the West in the fifteenth century," writes Spengler (288). "The Renaissance was born from spite. It lacks the depth, extent, and confidence of form-building instincts. . . . It is the only epoch in history whose theory was more consistent than its achievements" (350). The Renaissance was no more than a failed attempt to reject Gothic, we gather from his book; while the Gothic encompassed entire human lives, the achievements of the Renaissance were limited to the arts. It never affected Western European ways of thinking or life (300). A strictly ancient capital is simply not to be found in Renaissance works (309), while Palladio's architectural treatise, he claims, had no influence in the West (534).

For Strzygowski, the Renaissance brought about the "humanist" attitude (understood as an orientation toward Greco-Roman antiquity), a superstition that imposed on the North an attitude of hostility toward the fatherland.[45] The Renaissance did not arise on Italian soil through study of nature and antiquity, he says. Rather, the strength of form was brought about by Gothic influence, and the Gothic is the decisive core of Renaissance art.[46] Some styles arise from their own ground, while others rely on foreign heritage, we read in his 1940 *Deutsche Nordseele* (73). The Renaissance belongs

to the latter type; it is a piece of antiquity that arose at the end of the Middle Ages from the Gothic that initiated it (73). In *Europas Machtkunst*, he explains that it is a grave mistake to attribute to Italians and the Mediterranean a strong talent for form. It was the Greeks, Iranians, and Germans who created artistically valuable new forms and brought them to the Mediterranean. Rome, says Strzygowski, never achieved anything, not even the Italians of the Renaissance, who analyzed German and Greek forms imported from the North and compiled them into a textbook (277).

Denials of this kind are certainly more interesting for their motivation than relevant as contributions to scholarship. Psychoanalytic literature provides an extensive body of research about denial, understood as "a primitive and desperate unconscious method of coping with otherwise intolerable conflict, anxiety and emotional distress or pain," triggered in an encounter with a "painful object."[47] Denial works through "the elimination of intolerable data from conscious awareness" (81). It is, in fact, remarkable how directly applicable psychoanalytic theories of denial are to the kind of "scholarship" we have just seen.[48] As Theodor Dorpat describes in his summary of psychoanalytic research on denial, denial is "an unconscious defense mechanism against unpleasurable ideas, affects and perceptions" (1). The important characteristic of denial as a defense mechanism is that "the fantasy attacks on the painful object cause an arrest of the subject's capacities for rational thought and communication regarding the painful object" (10). Particularly interesting is Dorpat's description of the second stage of defensive denial, in which cognitive arrest is followed by "screen behavior" (13). In this stage, the subject asserts the opposite from what has just been denied (13). The denial of one's weakness, Dorpat describes, may be followed by a boastful assertion of one's strength (13). By doing so the subject strives "to substitute a wished-for relation for the painful object relation destroyed in fantasy during the antecedent cognitive arrest phase" (14). One finds this second phase exceptionally well exemplified in the claims that the Italian Renaissance was a German achievement.

Appropriations

Germanic appropriation of the achievements of the Italian Renaissance (including the attempts to present them as Gothic art, which was perceived as Northern and therefore Germanic) has a long history, going back at least to Leopold von Ranke. In his *Geschichte der romanischen und germanischen*

Völker von 1494–1514, Ranke claims that the Romance and Germanic nations share a deeper unity that separates them from the Slavic, Lettonian, and Hungarian ethnic groups.[49] Even when the latter share the same Latin Christianity, Ranke argues, their customs and constitution distance them from the Germanic and Romance nations. The claim is bizarre; at the turn of the fifteenth to the sixteenth century Germans certainly had less interaction with Italy than did Hungary or the Slavic population along the Adriatic coast. It is also unclear why Romanians, whose credentials as a Romance people are impeccable, should have more in common with the Dutch than the Hungarians. He also claims that during the specific period he is writing about, non-Germanic and non-Romance nations did not exercise independent influence (10). In fact, in that period Poland, Bohemia, and Hungary were ruled by the Jagiellonian dynasty, whose members' actions were certainly independent and whose kings' contacts with Italian affairs were hardly less developed than those of German (let alone Scandinavian) courts. The period 1494–1514 is particularly unsuitable for the argument Ranke wants to make (he could have chosen a more suitable one, such as the time of Frederick II): during the wars that followed Charles VIII's march on Naples, Italy was the focus of European affairs, but while French and Spanish troops were marching up and down the peninsula, the influence of the Germanic nations was mainly limited to the presence of Swiss mercenaries. As Erasmus put it, the German emperor Maximilian remained to "doze over his stove."[50]

Why would (how could) a historian of Ranke's stature overlook these facts? Is his perception merely a reflection of his anti-Slavic sentiments? (In the same book he celebrated the extermination of the Slavic population west of the Odra as a "glorious success.")[51] Maybe, but this still does not explain why he wanted to assert the unity of the Germanic and Romance peoples. Ranke actually answers this question himself. In the same book, he states that precisely in the period he is writing about, the Italians developed their intellectual achievement to a level of perfection that to the Germanic-Romance nations has ever since appeared to be the highest state of civilization [*Bildung*] that *they* have achieved.[52] The introduction of the pronoun "they" suddenly makes the *Italian* Renaissance a *German* achievement too. In his *Geschichte der Päpste*, Ranke is even more emphatic: "everything beautiful that architecture, sculpture, and painting have produced in modern times belongs to this epoch"—that is, the end of the fifteenth and the early sixteenth century.[53] Once we take these statements into account, what originally seemed to be Ranke's oversight becomes a carefully constructed

strategy of German cultural appropriation of the Italian Renaissance. Ranke's claim is not about how things were, but a contribution to his and his compatriots' self-esteem regulation. A hundred years later, Heinrich Ritter von Srbik wrote that Ranke described how Romanic and Germanic nations shared the same level of cultural development (nothing less than *gleichgeartete Kulturhöhe*) and joint cultural achievements in various fields, including artistic creativity during the Renaissance.[54] Ranke was saying what his compatriots wanted to believe; with his claim Ranke initiated an important tradition in German scholarship.

When Spengler actually recognizes achievements by Renaissance artists, he strives to reclassify them as Gothic or Germanic. Leonardo, Raphael, and Michelangelo, he says, were the only great men Italy had produced since Dante; in spite of their efforts to revive antiquity in accordance with Medicean theories, they actually remained Gothic artists (351). The paintings of Filippino Lippi, Ghirlandaio and Botticelli, Pollaiuolo, and even Leonardo have much more Dutch in them than ancient qualities, argues Spengler (303). Strzygowski similarly writes that artists such as Leonardo, Michelangelo, and Giorgione are Northern men whose greatness, rooted in Greece and the Gothic, has been understood the least by their compatriots.[55] He also states that Raphael came to Florence from the North (it is utterly unclear how this could be the case) and was a simple and natural Indo-German (376–77). In Strzygowski's *Deutsche Nordseele*, we read that Michelangelo was a man of the Atlantic;[56] having arrived from the North in ancient times, he lived out his Viking strength on the Mediterranean (172). The same idea is developed in *Europas Machtkunst*, where Strzygowski explains that Michelangelo was a man of the original Nordic world ("ein nordischer Urweltmensch") (361). In the same book, we read that Vasari's way of seeing Italian art is the childish sickness of art historians (372) and that the national movement in the Italian visual arts started in the North (374). Similarly, according to Hans Jantzen, the innovative aspects of Giotto's paintings merely reflected Northern, Gothic influence.[57] In his *Wesenszüge deutscher Kunst*, Wilhelm Pinder desperately searched for German influences in Italian art: a strong German influence must have existed in early quattrocento Venice, he claims (but cannot specify it); some German workers must have been active in the building of the cathedral of Milan, and *maniera tedesca* was actually discussed once by one of the building committees; when Renaissance Italians admired Flemish artists, they must have occasionally confused them with Germans (27–29). An

even more grotesque example of the same desperation is Sedlmayr's proposal to redefine the Renaissance as a period so that it could include Goethe.[58]

A more complex theory about the Italian Renaissance as an achievement of German blood was proposed by Julius Langbehn in his *Rembrandt als Erzieher* (140). Venice in particular is a Germanic-Slavic creation, he claims. Germanic faces dominate in Titian's and Tintoretto's portraits, while the names of old Venetian families, such as Gradenigo, Mocenigo, and Zobenigo, are mispronounced versions of south-Slavic names that end in "-ic" (193). The Germanic element was nevertheless dominant in Venice (Italians receive no mention in his account) (193), and Venice should be an example of how the Prussia of his day (it was ultimately, he admits, a German colony on Slavic lands) (190) ought to suppress its Slavic population, which he sees as Prussia's inherited disease (183, 181).

In his *Rasse und Stil*, Hans Günther proposes another, not dissimilar racial view of the Renaissance. He divides European races into four groups: Nordic, East-Baltic, Dinaric (which he mainly identifies with southern Germany), and *Westisch*—the last includes the populations of western Mediterranean (Italy, Spain), France, and Ireland (15). Unlike other racial groups, Günther explains, the *Westisch* race can claim no prominent artists (as mentioned, the group includes Italy and France), having always received its artistic driving force from other races (50, 64). The Renaissance in particular was a creation of the Nordic soul (50), and its essence was Nordic (11). Donatello, for instance, is a Nordic artist, since one can see in his work the influence of Greek and Roman art, which, Günther claims, is also essentially Nordic (12). Similarly, Poussin was a Nordic artist, while Michelangelo belonged to the Dinaric race (91). Günther also hypothesizes that the baroque was a Dinaric phenomenon (90).

The great masterpiece of the Germanic historical appropriation of the Italian Renaissance is Ludwig Woltmann's *Die Germanen und die Renaissance* (1905).[59] In Woltmann's view, the cultural capacities of a group are proportional to the percentage of the Nordic race in the group (16). Italians have been culturally so productive because they have very little Latin blood (2). Woltmann thus lists Florentine Germanic names (35), provides a page-long list of popes of Germanic origin (38–39), and claims that the Tuscan name Lapo comes from Arnulf (35). He also claims that Arnolfo di Cambio and Lorenzo Ghiberti were Germans because of their Germanic names (69), and that the name Brunelleschi comes from the German Brünell (69).

Alberti's family allegedly originated from a Hildebrand in the tenth century (72); Verrochio is also a Germanic name (72); Bramante's name comes from the German Braken, Brehm (72); Buonarotti comes from Bonne, Bohn and Rohde, Rothe (73). In other cases, it is the visible racial characteristics that prove the Germanness of Renaissance individuals; the Germanic race is the ideal of beauty in Procopius (57), Giotto (59), and the Renaissance (59), Woltmann assures us. Luca della Robbia and Michelozzo Michelozzi did not have Germanic names, but they had blond beards and hair (71), while Palladio, according to one portrait, had pale eyes (76). Leonardo da Vinci had a Germanic racial constitution; the sources praise the beauty of his hair, so we can infer that he was blond (83–86). Savonarola had blue eyes, and his family name could be Germanic (96). Sansovino was small and was not blond, but had fair skin (72). Woltmann has to admit that Michelangelo had black hair and beard, so he concludes that he must have been a mixed breed (73). He concludes that 85–90 percent of Italian genius is of Germanic origin (145).

Conclusion

HUBRIS AND METHOD

For Milton, pride was the reason for Satan's fall; for John Climacus, hubris is an unmistakable symptom of demonic possession.[1] These explanations belong to bygone eras and rely on concepts that we would not use today, yet they pertain to a tenacious phenomenon that has kept recurring through this book. Phenomena do not change merely because we rename them or conceptualize them differently. Denials of one's (perceived) inadequacies and desperate efforts to use self-deception in order to regulate self-esteem have repeatedly resurfaced in the historiographical models described here; it is remarkable that a history of a methodological debate had to return, over and over again, to this seemingly unrelated phenomenon. We have even seen that Lukács' efforts to deal with the related topic of irrationalism during this same era failed because his Marxist approach prevented him from analyzing that very specific content of the irrationalities described in his book. This remarkable persistence of a single concern that tirelessly reintroduces the topic of the author's self-esteem is a testimony to the frailties and fallibilities (to use Panofsky's phrase) that are best grasped through analysis of the denials that employ them.

Narcissism

History writing sometimes reveals more about its author's own concerns than about the topic it allegedly pertains to; as Thomas Mann put it, to write about the inverse of a certain topic is also a way to write about that topic.[2] Consider Wilhelm Pinder's statement that no Maori, but only a European, could paint like Gauguin.[3] The statement is actually true—just as it is also true that no German or *other* Frenchman could paint like Gauguin either. Gauguin was an original artist. But Pinder did not make

his point in order to emphasize Gauguin's originality. Nor did he say that *only a Frenchman* could paint like Gauguin. Pinder's implicit point is, rather, that a great painter like Gauguin has something in common with a German like himself: they are both Europeans. When historians make statements about various groups, it is always useful to listen to what they imply (or deny) about *themselves* and the groups they identify with. Consider, similarly, Thomas Mann's claim that "France created the Gothic from German spirit" or Wilhelm Worringer's claim that "Germanness is the *conditio sine qua non* of the Gothic," or Kurt Gerstenberg's claim that Van Gogh's spatial perception was German.[4] They are not claiming the Gothic or Van Gogh's perception just for *any* ethnic group, but for their own—and it is reasonable to conclude that such claims say less about the origin of the Gothic or about Van Gogh's perception than about the need of their authors to make such statements. They resemble the people who hang portraits of important historical figures on the walls of their living rooms and tell guests that these are their relatives.[5]

The obvious implications of such statements for the maintenance of their authors' self-esteem, and the fact that they have to be dismissed as absurd if this motivation is not recognized, preclude some philosophical perspectives that could be offered as alternatives to a psychoanalytic understanding based on the modern research on narcissism. Such alternatives include, for instance, Herbert Fingarette's discussion of self-deception and Jean-Paul Sartre's description of *mauvaise fois*.[6] While they provide potentially valuable wider insights, they do not deal with self-esteem regulation, which is the central aspect of the phenomenon we discuss here.[7] Correlation between self-esteem regulation problems and narcissistic behavior is a psychoanalytic commonplace; problems with inflated, vulnerable, and unstable self-esteem are the core characteristic of narcissistic disorder, while pathological self-esteem regulation is regarded as the key pathogenic issue in narcissism.[8] As Elsa Ronningstam describes in her survey of modern theories of narcissism, narcissism is characterized by self-esteem that is "inconsistent, fragile and maintained by pathologically defensive, expressive and supportive regulatory processes."[9] It generates fantasies that concentrate on being special, or exceptional, and overcompensates for the defects that one believes oneself to have.[10] Communication with others is mainly used to enhance and protect self-esteem, while "[l]ife is a search for pseudo-status, an empty series of aspirations that serves no purpose other than self-enhancement."[11] The result is specific strategies that the individual

systematically pursues in order to compensate for an incapacity to maintain an adequate level of self-esteem. The *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders* lists nine such strategies that are characteristic of narcissistic personality disorder, and most of them can be explicitly manifested in scholarship—for instance, grandiosity, the exaggeration of one's achievements, fantasies of unlimited power, the absence of empathy, a sense of entitlement, and envy.[12] It should be also mentioned that while psychoanalytic authors were the first to initiate research on the phenomenon, the modern understanding of narcissism is extensively based on research in psychiatry and empirical psychology and not limited to psychoanalysis.[13]

. . . And Scholarship

The discussion of appropriations and denials in chapter 3 presented a substantial number of examples of the historiographical manifestations of envy; we have seen that their common result was self-aggrandizing attributions. Grandiosity, implicit or explicit, often in the form of the exaggeration of or fantasies about one's achievements, is the most pervasive manifestation of narcissism. Narcissistic narratives are often marked by a tendency to make self-aggrandizing attributions that enhance self-esteem.[14] If a person says that Michelangelo was a Florentine, this is a simple fact and we should take it as such. If a person says that Michelangelo was from Ohio, it is fair to wonder how he acquired this false belief. If a person says that Michelangelo was from Ohio like himself, then this claim may be but need not be narcissistically motivated. But if we are dealing with a person whose education gives us grounds to believe that he knows where Michelangelo was born, and writes books for an educated public in which he makes great efforts to convince everyone of the false claim that Michelangelo was of his stock, then the passion and efforts invested in this enterprise can be reasonably taken to indicate that it is driven by a narcissistic motivation. One must certainly think that something has gone wrong if one reads, in a book by a professor emeritus at what was possibly the most prestigious European center of art-historical research, that Michelangelo was a Viking. Further, grandiosity is not always ultimately narcissistic, unless it is incongruent with one's own achievements.[15] Grandiosity based on the achievements of other members of one's group,

achievements in which one has not personally participated, belongs to this latter category. People "take pride" in something they have not achieved themselves because they feel the need to; arguably, "we" is one of the most dangerous and delusive words a historian may use. Pinder, for instance, in his *Wesenszüge deutscher Kunst*, uses it ad nauseam in order to identify himself with every minor innovation in European art that can be attributed to German artists, and to conclude that the Germans, including himself, are ahead of the rest of Europe in entire fields of artistic creativity.[16] In chapter 3, we saw some impressive examples of the aggrandizing attributions of cultural achievements to one's own group; such attributions enhance self-esteem by allowing one to participate, as in a mystical union, in the achievements of other group members. The person claims for him- or herself, by virtue of membership in a group, the achievements of other members of the group, and sometimes even falsely attributes to that group the achievements of the members of other groups. The claim of participation necessarily relies on a jargon of identity that conceives of groups as more than the mere sum of their members. Without the jargon of identity, there is no gratification; other people's achievements cannot be used for the maintenance of one's self-esteem. If groups are mere sums of individuals, then relationships within the group and one's contribution to the group's achievements become transparent, and one cannot claim the achievements of other members of the group for oneself.

Spontaneous assumptions of one's exceptional entitlement are another form of grandiosity. An example in historiography is the historian's fantasies about his or her privileged position in history.[17] Here, too, the collectivist methodology can be instrumentalized as part of the strategy. In the introduction we saw that this fantasy constitutes one standard response to the reflexive argument: everyone's reasoning capacities are assumed to be determined by membership in a group, and result from the historical context—except the author's own reasoning capacities. "What they really are after," observes Czesław Miłosz, "is to push others into the position of objects in order to look upon themselves as subjects."[18] According to this model, the historian attributes to him- or herself free will and reasoning capacities that are methodologically denied to historical figures. From human beings, historical figures are reduced to mindless mechanical participants defined by their historical and social contexts. This also explains the disregard for the implications of the reflexive argument that we have observed as a common feature of collectivist history writing. Certainly a

historian who proposes that all thinking is historically determined would have to consider the possibility that the same applies to his or her own thinking and consider the problems that result from the reflexive argument—unless faith in one's own privileged position in history ("entitlement," in psychoanalytic terminology) blocks that insight. A good example, mentioned in the introduction, is Gadamer's dismissal of logical reasoning when reflexive argument led him into self-contradiction. Gadamer famously insisted that historical interpretations have to be done with awareness of the historical position of the historian, but he reacted with hubris to the argument that his position as a philosopher, and faith in the universality of hermeneutics, should be subject to the historicity that he claimed was constitutive of all other intellectual enterprises.[19] Arguably, it is fair to talk about hubris if an author expects his consciously self-contradicting position (as we have seen in the introduction) to be taken with blind faith and readers to reject logical reasoning in order to adapt to his worldview.

The reduction of other individuals to mere representatives of their groups, with no reasoning nor willing capacities independent of the way they are classified, corresponds to yet another important diagnostic criterion of narcissism: the incapacity for empathy.[20] As Heinz Kohut points out, empathy is based on "the recognition that, to a large extent, the basic inner experiences of people remain similar to our own."[21] Nonempathetic modes of cognition are suitable when dealing with objects, but if they are employed in understanding humans, they lead to "a mechanistic and lifeless conception of psychological reality" (79). The collectivist understanding of individuals as manifestations of their groups assumes that individuals can be objectified and studied as mere exemplars of the contexts one classifies them into. The denial of the identity and separateness of another person plays an important role in some psychoanalytic models of narcissism.[22] An interesting example of such nonempathetic historiography that can be taken to support the psychoanalytic approach is the collectivist historians' strongly negative stance on cosmopolitanism—the highest state of individualism, as Jacob Burckhardt observed.[23] The cosmopolitan worldview is impossible if one precludes the possibility of transcultural understanding and empathy. The rejection of cosmopolitanism because of its relation to the Enlightenment can already be found in Herder.[24] Julius Langbehn criticized Lessing's cosmopolitanism and saw in it the main reason for Lessing's poor acceptance among Germans.[25] Karl Lamprecht reproached Ranke for his cosmopolitanism; Spengler saw in it ultimate urban decadence; Hans

Sedlmayr identified it with the "terror of reason."[26] For Erich Rothacker, the understanding of humans as individuals is a result of the dissolution of "organic" communities, which cease to be understood as based on blood and faith.[27] Wilhelm Pinder criticized the nineteenth-century "madness of rootlessness."[28] One finds, however, sympathy for cosmopolitanism in Marx and Engels; while they hardly had good things to say about the bourgeoisie in the *Communist Manifesto*, they did credit it for the cosmopolitan organization of production and consumption.[29] Generally speaking, cosmopolitanism assumes that individuals can exist outside their contexts and when encountered need to be understood as humans—independently of how one classifies them. Their reasoning and willing capacities cannot be merely classified away into their contexts. This demand puts them on equal footing with the historian, who cannot reduce their intellectual abilities and acting to a mere manifestation of their context. Not surprisingly, such a psychological threat is likely to invoke the denial of equality and possibly cause rage in a narcissistic mindset.

Stereotyping

Psychological theories of narcissism thus throw important additional light on collectivist methodologies. A collectivist historical explanation, as Panofsky pointed out, cannot be formulated without denial of the free will and rationality of historical subjects—it requires the historian to disengage from an empathetic interaction with historical figures in order to classify them. Certainly, it is reasonable to assume that Archimedes could not have invented nuclear physics because he could not have acquired the necessary knowledge in the context in which he lived, nor did he have the resources required to make the necessary experiments. It is, however, quite different to say that Polygnotus, because he was an ancient Greek, could not have conceived of a landscape painting. This latter claim is based on a classificatory strategy that exalts the historian by attributing to the members of specific groups inferior cognitive and intellectual capacities. No attempt is made to understand their *specific* situation—in the sense of an effort to specify the skills that were unavailable to these individuals. In a more emphatic form, this strategy can generate arbitrary assertions, such as the claim that Russians cannot do astronomy. In the terminology of modern social psychology, as we have seen, this is called stereotyping.

Let us therefore look more closely at stereotyping. Consider, for instance, Ernst von Aster's observation, noted earlier, about the widespread deficiencies in self-confidence in the German context. Indeed, a historian who has previously worked on some other period (the Renaissance, for instance) and then embarks on a project pertaining to the cultural and intellectual history of the Wilhelmine and Weimar eras may be tempted to agree that the documents of this period are more often burdened with their authors' needs to resolve self-esteem problems than those in some other historical contexts. Would this be stereotyping? One could even try to strengthen the argument by stating examples, such as the exceptional proliferation of especially thick books during the era, whose repetitive content does not justify their size and can only be explained by the need of their authors to appear learned, as Droysen himself put it.[30] (The reader's boredom in that case, it can be further argued, corresponds to what is actually known to be a characteristic psychoanalyst's reaction in the psychotherapy of narcissistic patients.)[31] The impression is further corroborated by the pretentious style that many authors of the era spontaneously used to emphasize their importance: when one reads in Max Scheler's introduction to his *Wissensformen* the warning that the book is crucial for the understanding of his philosophy, one has to think of the self-reassuring satisfaction with which he imagined legions of scholars studying his wisdom. Ridiculing Heidegger's pompous style has been a favorite pastime of a number of men of letters for the past fifty years. Anson Rabinbach, for instance, described Heidegger's *Letter on Humanism* as "a careful reformulation and restructuring of a narrative on the event with which Heidegger is most profoundly concerned: the collapse of Germany, whose chief victim Heidegger considered to be himself."[32] Certainly, the Italian Renaissance had such authors as well—one thinks of Giovanni di Viterbo's forgeries or Vincenzo Scamozzi's rambling treatise *L'idea dell'architettura universale*, obviously written with the intention of impressing its readers. However, their numbers and passion can hardly match the all-pervasive domination of such needs in the German cultural context. Even during the Mussolini era it would be hard to find in Italy intellectuals of the stature of Ranke who seriously claimed that Italians participated in the intellectual achievements of Kant, Goethe, or Hegel. Marx and Engels in their early writings already mocked the traits that we regard as narcissistic and that motivated the arguments of their opponents, such as the open admission of envy in a statement they cite, "What interests me in my property is that I have more

than others," or the need for a privileged position in society in the argument that "there can be no religion if there is no privileged religion; if a religion loses its power to exclude, it ceases to exist."[33] Similarly, historians of the *völkisch* movement have described its protagonists' "inflated sense of their own significance" combined with a lack of self-esteem.[34] In both world wars British propaganda claimed that Germany's war efforts were motivated by envy of Britain's maritime empire—a not unjustified claim, considering that expressions of such envy by German officials, including the Kaiser, in the years preceding World War I were enough to alarm the Foreign Office.[35] (The last Kaiser's narcissistic traits have been extensively studied by historians.)[36] The assumption of Germany's privileged position in world history is finely summarized in an article by Ludwig Dehio: "Should the life spirits of nations not triumph once again over the great [British] fleet the way they triumphed once over [Napoleon's] Grande Armée? . . . If Germany builds its own fleet, it is not following its interests, but, rather, it fulfills its world mission. . . . It performs the work of the Hegelian World Spirit."[37] Troeltsch's wartime writings are permeated with statements about Germany's world mission and the historically privileged right of the German state, which is the human form of God's spirit, to march over corpses.[38] One could go on citing examples of such self-reassuring frankness; they permeate the documents of the era and are available in great numbers. Eventually, the historian will have to concede that Aster may be right and consequently consider the possibility that equivalent trends in (art) historiography are part of a much wider pattern widespread in German society. From this perspective it would be appropriate to talk about a veritable epidemic of self-esteem regulation problems. But would such a perspective be stereotyping? The epidemic model is particularly useful. Like a medical doctor who suddenly encounters a large number of individual patients with the same symptoms, a historian in a situation like this may notice the widespread repetition of a pattern in one context that appears to have been much less common in another (the Italian Renaissance, for instance). This observation (in the form presented by Aster) would still not count as stereotyping, but it would be stereotyping if one said, for instance, that a certain author manifested certain narcissistic problems *because* he belonged to this context. This would de facto amount to the adoption of the collectivist explanatory strategy. Certainly there were Germans who did not manifest these traits, just as there are individuals in a population affected by a flu epidemic who do not get ill. Stereotyp-

ing is also misleading because it attributes to membership in a group the capacity to *cause* the properties of an individual; it postulates false causality. This is, as we have seen, a common problem with collectivist methodologies. In the case of a flu epidemic, a medical doctor will not explain that a person is ill because he or she was part of an affected population, but because he or she came into contact with the virus. Similarly, mere membership in a group itself cannot explain the activity and creativity of individuals—though, as Aster pointed out, widespread insecurities can constitute a social force and shape social structures.